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C.C. STURM.

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J.H. 1827  
CONTEMPLATIONS

ON THE SUFFERINGS OF

**JESUS CHRIST;**

IN A SERIES OF

**DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES,**

AN EXPLANATORY PARAPHRASE OF THE  
GOSPEL NARRATIVE



BY

**CHRISTOPHER CHRISTIAN STURM;**

AUTHOR OF

*"Reflections, Morning Communings, &c."*

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN,

BY

**W. JOHNSTONE, A. M.**

WITH

*A MEMOIR AND PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR.*

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**PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.**

## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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THE Translator of STURM'S MORNING COMMUNINGS now presents to the public the version of another work by that author; to which undertaking he has been encouraged in no small degree by the success attending his former effort.

In his "REFLECTIONS," Sturm purposed to lead the serious mind from the contemplation of divine power, as manifested in the visible operations and productions of nature, to the knowledge and admiration of the supreme Maker of all. In his "COMMUNINGS," his aim was to excite the awakened spirit to fervency of prayer and gratitude, and to suggest appropriate topics both for vocal morning orisons and silent meditations. In the present volume, he directs the thoughts of the pious to those sorrowful, but infinitely important scenes, to which we owe our salvation; in order that the reader may become fully acquainted with Him in whom his faith is placed, and learn duly to appreciate the glorious work of Redemption. That the execution of this task has not been unworthy of its high momentous object, the public voice has long ago decided; the original

work having passed through several editions in Germany, where it is deservedly popular. Should, therefore, ought like a similar portion of public favour be extended to the book in an English dress, one of the most ardent wishes of the Translator will be fulfilled.

No biographical memoir of Sturm having yet been given to the public, the Translator trusts that the Sketch of the Life of so estimable a character, and of one so deservedly popular in our own country, will be acceptable to the readers of the present volume. It has been collected from authentic sources; and although, like that of the generality of men devoted to studious pursuits, it presents little of vicissitude, the particulars here recorded will serve to show how greatly Sturm was beloved by the flock over which he presided, and how devotedly he fulfilled all the duties of a Christian pastor.

# MEMOIR

OF

## CHRISTOPHER CHRISTIAN STURM.

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THE inheritance of rank, opulence, and power, proceeding in lineal descent through a long extended race, is an occurrence, of which the family-annals of every civilized nation of the globe affords innumerable instances. But an heir-loom of extraordinary capacity and unusual literary application, of the fame of superior scholarship, and of the merit of enlightening, improving, and edifying mankind, handed down from sire to child without interruption for successive generations, is so rare a phenomenon in genealogy, that one might be almost tempted to suppose, that nature has set her fiat against the flow of genius in the same blood even to the second remove in a direct course. To form an exception to this common rule, was, however, a destiny which distinguished the forefathers of the composer of the present volume. And although the circumstances of the life of the latter may be little known in this country, yet the name which he has so firmly established among us, and the popularity of such of his writings as have been already translated, testify that he did not degenerate from the intellectual nobility of his ancestors.

Among these eminent men, the earliest in date ap-

appears to have been the celebrated John Sturm, to whom the title of the German Cicero was, in his time, ascribed. Born at Schleiden near Cologne on the first of October, 1507, he studied at Liege and Louvain; in the latter of which places he founded a Greek printing-press, attended with the most beneficial results, and taught for eight years logic and the ancient languages with high applause and success. He afterwards removed to Paris, where his house was crowded with students not only from Germany and Brabant, and with natives of France, but also with a considerable number from England and Italy, who were attracted to his lectures by the celebrity of his name. In 1537, he was at Strasburg, in which city he contributed not a little, by his prudence and abilities, to establish the reputation of the Gymnasium, a seminary that soon afterwards obtained very great repute. Neither did he effect less for the university itself, which in the middle of the sixteenth century reached its most flourishing condition; and of this institution he was, in consequence, appointed perpetual rector. Having at length reached his seventy-sixth year, when he could look back through a retrospect of five and forty annual revolutions devoted with the utmost energy to the highest avocations of instruction, sectarian hypocrisy or zeal disturbed the remainder of his days; and he was removed from the station he so well deserved to retain. Blindness followed, and sorrow and calamity embittered the dregs of his existence. On the third of March, in the year 1589, he was liberated from his troubles by the hand of death, and exchanged mortal darkness for immortal light,—imperfect terrestrial knowledge for perfect celestial intelligence; no more to be upbraided with having deserted the catholic church, to which the

chance of birth had attached him, for the protestant creed, the unbiassed choice of his matured inclinations; nor again to incur the loss of favour from being suspected or even convicted of Calvinism. To have paused for a moment over the history of this man will surely be held excusable. It is not without its moral, and the general voice of his contemporaries, whose decision his works have confirmed in the judgment of posterity, proclaimed him to be an ornament to the age. His fame allured princes and nobles of all ranks to Strasburg, while his scholastic, philosophical, and rhetorical publications, and his editions both of the Greek and Latin classics—among which that of Cicero stands in peculiar estimation—conduced to the permanent diffusion of useful erudition, far beyond the walls of the university, and to the well-grounded improvement and instruction of a vast multitude of individuals, who, like a thousand streams issuing from one inexhaustible spring, have poured the waters of this great fountain down the torrent of time throughout the whole land to this day.

On the third of November, 1635, John Christopher Sturm, fated also to preserve the family palm in its full bloom, was born at Hippolstein. Jena, Leyden, and Leipsic enrolled him among their most conspicuous students of theology and mathematics. At Jena he afterwards delivered lectures with universal approbation, and already, in the year 1664, was admired as a preacher of no small repute at Deiningen. In 1669, he was appointed professor of physics and mathematics at Altdorf. There he continued till the period of his death, which occurred on the twenty-fifth of December, 1703, and put an end to a career of science which had been



not less brilliant in itself than advantageous to society at large. The excellent works written and compiled by this most industrious and ingenious scholar, on natural philosophy and all the various branches of mathematical knowledge, were not confined in celebrity and benefit to his native country alone, but speedily made their way into every nation in Europe; and long maintained their pre-eminence in the common opinion. In regard to Germany, it was his peculiar honour to be the first that introduced the study of experimental philosophy to general notice, regularly lectured upon it, and fundamentally, yet popularly, illustrated and explained it in his writings; thus assisting in a very great measure to expel the prevailing spirit of bigotry and many of the other prejudices of ignorance and superstition incident to the era in which he lived. Exclusively of his numerous other productions, chiefly in Latin, he translated Archimedes both into that language and into German, with an ability which has never ceased to be acknowledged, and is therefore considered worthy of this peculiar mention.

Leonard Christopher Sturm, the son of the preceding, came into the world at Altdorf, on the sixth of November, 1669, and did not in the sequel discredit the talents and fame of his father. He completed his academical course at Jena and Leipsic, and was early settled as a public instructor in Wolfenbittel, from which place, in 1702, he was called to the professorship of mathematics in Frankfort on the Oder. But architecture was his grand pursuit; and hence, in the year 1711, we find him in the service of the duke of Mecklenburg at Schweren, with the titles of chief director of the public buildings, and privy counsellor; in the

possession of which preferment he died on the sixth of June, 1719. Besides his own original compositions, his editions, with continuations and improvements, of a number of earlier architectural writings, tended much to increase his reputation ; and it is generally owned, that his country stands deeply indebted to him for better principles of the science in question than it had hitherto possessed, which he had the skill to display in a manner universally intelligible and perspicuous ; and for having opened a wider circle of practical operation than had formerly existed. Fortification and hydraulics were also benefited by the exertions of his acute and busy mind ; and however opinions may vary as to the value of the arguments discussed, his learned controversies, in which he opposed several of the most distinguished theologians and philosophers of the day, as Wolf, Fabricius, Reinbeck, Buddeus, &c. must still be regarded as a testimony of his extensive acquirements, and acuteness of mind. His son John James Sturm was a profound and much respected civilian, who discharged for many years with more than ordinary sharpness of intellect, and aptitude for public business, the offices of imperial notary and actuary to the courts of magistracy in Augsburg. With qualifications sufficient to have forced from the world a large tribute of fame, he seems to have chosen rather to content himself with the applause of the few, and the silent consciousness of his own merits and integrity, than to enter the noisy and dangerous lists of oft misjudging fame. These virtues were not without their reward from above, even in the present world: the twenty-fifth of January, 1740, blessed him with a son, the worthy object of the following cursory biography,—the writer whose

REFLECTIONS ON EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR, Great Britain has received even through the shadowy medium of the translation of a translation, among her best and dearest religious classics ! Christopher Christian Sturm, —how prophetic was that second baptismal appellation !—received his first instruction in the Gymnasium or foundation-school of his native city Augsburg, and his further preparation for the university took place in the public seminary, or higher institute, connected with the same establishment. During this period his progress in all the usual departments of study appears to have been extremely rapid ; to which not only the attainments of his father, but also the probable aid of his grandsire, the erudite and able schoolmaster, Hincke, might have greatly contributed. In proof of this remark, it need only be adduced, that as early as 1761, the second year after his matriculation in Jena, he was already dignified with a master's degree ; an honour at that time, particularly, of no light acquirement nor insignificant import, and which followed his election a twelvemonth prior,—that is, almost as soon as he arrived in the town, as a member of the Latin society of the same well-known seat of learning. At the close of 1761, he visited Halle ; but scarcely had he there commenced his resumed collegiate pursuits for a few months, when he was entreated to become one of the assistants of the royal Pædagogium or grammar-school. In this station he continued till the year 1765, when he was invited to Sorau, and appointed *conrector* or second master of the great public academy. His merits were not, however, of a description to be soon forgotten at Halle. The first ecclesiastical vacancy was offered to him, and he commenced his noble apostolic career as

fourth preacher in the market-church, at the beginning of the year 1767. Promotion waited on the footsteps of his youthful virtues, and within the very same year he ascended the pulpit as third deacon. In the succeeding year he formed a matrimonial alliance with a lady named Bunning, the daughter of an officer in the service of the elector of Saxony. In 1769, after soliciting him to accept the situation, the church of the Holy Ghost in Magdeburg received him with excessive joy, in the capacity of second minister. A residence of more than eleven years in this town afforded him leisure for, and opportunities of, displaying the excellence of his heart, and the superiority of his head, and of fully confirming the early and sanguine prognostications both of his relations, and other more narrow observers of his boyhood and advancing youth.—“In this place,” says M. Thies, one of his most intimate friends, in a modest eulogy to his memory, “in this place, esteemed and honoured as his merits deserved, by all its inhabitants, and especially most tenderly beloved by his own congregation, Sturm spent, as he has often himself declared, the most tranquil and best portion of his life ; and here also he composed the greater part of the useful and beautiful productions of his pen.” It was not, however, the will of God, that his faithful and pious servant should here experience the decline of age, or yield back the immortal spirit with which he had endowed him. A voluntary, unsought-for call was unexpectedly sent to him from Hamburg ; and Sturm, who valued neither gold nor honour, but only the eternal souls and the temporal welfare of his fellow-creatures, sacrificed his private feelings, and his pleasant friendships, that he might be able to do more good in a

wider sphere of action, and, with an augmented revenue, might have it in his power to relieve more effectually the indigent, and afford solace to the distressed. His election as head pastor of St. Peter's church occurred on the twenty-sixth of April, 1778; and on the twenty-ninth of the July following, he took that solemn and affectionate farewell of his hearers in Magdeburg, which left no heart unmoved, no eye unmoistened, and of which the few surviving old yet delight to speak. The ensuing day was that of his departure: his convoy was the prayers and the kind wishes of all, not only publicly manifested and announced, but inwardly and sincerely felt. His sermon of inauguration was delivered on the first of September, and corroborated every thing that had been said of his talents as a preacher. Its impression was vivid, yet lasting:—Christian Sturm was no more a stranger in Hamburg. His ability as a preacher continued every day to obtain for him increasing applause and to multiply his auditory; but this general applause was as nothing, compared with the admiration and the love which his conduct as a follower of Jesus, and his exertions without the precincts of the house of God, as a messenger of the gospel, drew along with them. Yet the inscrutable decrees of Providence exempted him not from the common lot of humanity. Once more the usual saying of fretful grief seemed to be fulfilled,—“the best die first.” In 1782, a dangerous inflammation of the breast reduced Sturm almost to the edge of the grave. His tranquil spirit, the result of an unsullied conscience, his constitution, strong by moderation, although weak by nature, and the solicitous aid of medical skill prevailed, however, for a time. He recovered at least in part: his ministerial zeal burst

again into its full activity ; the temple of the Most High resounded again with his simple eloquence, affecting, impressive, and intelligible to every listener : the works of charity were prosecuted anew ; the sick saw him as before at their bed-side ; the dungeon of guilt was once more penetrated ; the outcast captive beheld the cheering look of sympathy ; and the despairing soul was taught to hope. But his health was more apparent than real, his spirit more willing than his body robust. Disease still lingered in his frame, and the universal destroyer scarcely quitted his hold of the victim.—The fatal hour approached. On the evening of the tenth August, 1786, the man of God was seized with a sudden discharge of blood in his garden, where he had spent the afternoon in cheerful intercourse with a few chosen friends. The melancholy consequences of this attack were made known to the afflicted citizens of Hamburg by Dr. Heiss, after some previous observations, in the following terms : “ Considerable blood-vessels must have been rent, for the weight of the lost blood amounted to several pounds. Our beloved pastor would in all likelihood have died on the spot, if a long and excessive fainting-fit had not lessened the flow. The great quantity of dry or congealed blood which remained on his lungs suddenly occasioned, on the fifth day of his illness, a violent inflammation, with a severe cough, difficulty of breathing, and a heavy pressure of the chest. Now were all the means that could be adopted to rescue him from death evidently fruitless.” At two in the morning of the twenty-sixth of August, Sturm was no more ! And all his writings, and all his enterprises of benevolence, and all his piety he had crowded into a space which,

computed from the first moment of his life, embraced but the petty sum of forty-six years, seven months, and a few days.

“ Sturm,” so writes one of the most approved among the biographers of his countrymen, “ possessed real theological learning, an enlightened conception of the christian religion, and a firm conviction of its divineness and beneficence. He held fast to this excellent and righteous principle, that we must first make every persuasion of sacred truth fruitful for godliness in ourselves, and then seek to work through its help holiness in others. His religious feelings ennobled in fact his whole mind, guided his sentiments, and governed all his actions. The goodness of his heart was upright and sincere, and the holiness of his life unfeigned, and free from every tinge of hypocrisy. A soul penetrated with a thankful veneration of God, an innate love of eternal truth, integrity of speech, and active practical righteousness, are in every respect striking and appropriate characteristics of the mental and moral picture of this good and great divine. Hence was he that spiritual teacher of devotion, and that ardent heart-speaking master of prayer, of whom all his writings and all his discourses exhibited so plainly the hand and seal. The hymns of praise and the prayers of thanksgiving so generally scattered through his compositions, were actually the language of his own sensations of gratitude and endearment towards God. His longing desire as to the present world, which was to see, were it possible, all men happy, and the ever prominent kindness of his disposition, shone forth anew with each new day of his existence, even as they do in almost every page with which he has benefited the human race, and

adorned the literature of worship. He laboured alike, and with equal ardour, in all his different offices, and under every change, whether of circumstances or place, continually to promote the felicity of each individual within the reach of his influence. In the school-room and in the church ; in the circle of his acquaintance and associates, in which he rejoiced to show a countenance of smiles ; and in all his relations with his parishioners and townsmen, he presented invariably the same consistent, unruffled, amiable, spotless character. He was a most faithful steward and cherisher of the poor, and unwearied in his solicitude, especially for the orphan, the widowed, and the sick. He divided with them his money in alms, he sent food to them from his table, he clothed them in their nakedness, he brought the physician to their pallets, and he furnished them with books to amuse their thoughts and aid his own unsparing counsel and instruction in leading them to their God. Gladly and often did he return the fee of his profession to the just-wedded couple, and to the fathers and mothers of families, when he had the least reason to suppose that the payment would be attended with embarrassment, or was made at the sacrifice of any of the necessities of life."

To this fragment be it subjoined—the anecdotes of the benevolence of Sturm are numerous. The rest may be judged from the three following. When this inestimable man left Magdeburg, he distributed all that remained to him from his benevolence, the proceeds of the sale of his furniture, among the indigent inhabitants : to Adam Creitz, at that time a young bookseller of the same town, who had recently commenced busi-



ness with little means, but with whose character his minister and benefactor seems to have been eminently pleased, Sturm made a free gift of the copy-right of one of his works, which he had written expressly for him, which was not only the first book that the former published, but the foundation also of his future fortune : and another friend in unfortunate circumstances, he rescued out of his distresses, and re-established in prosperity, by the present of the manuscript of a larger publication, of which, at the expense of much time and pains, he was partly the author and partly the editor or compiler and corrector.

In conjunction with the estimable and beneficent M. Busch, he contributed greatly to improve the sick hospital of Hamburg, and to augment its resources. For this purpose he induced a number of philanthropists like himself, to combine and subscribe for the use of that institution during a considerable number of years, a fixed annual sum ; and by his influence and intercession, it was also enriched by legacies to a considerable amount. Nor did he contribute less, either by act or counsel, to meliorate the situation of the mendicant and destitute in the populous residence of his latter days, brief though the period allotted to him in this his closing scene of duty unfortunately proved. His colleagues possessed in Sturm a wholly disinterested, candid, and serviceable fellow-labourer—a brother in the calling, who hesitated not to forego in their favour many advantages which he might have claimed, and to deprive himself of numerous conveniences belonging to his station. The good which one single person could not effect, or even several individuals together, this exem-

plary clergyman held it neither shame nor trouble to go about and recommend with entreaties and exhortations, till it was performed by the united help of a multitude.

In this brief memoir, it cannot be expected that any thing like a particular criticism of his various literary productions can be given. Let it suffice to say, the catalogue of them is not small ; for the wants of the unlettered christian, and the demands of the expanding faculties of childhood, occupied, in turn with his higher compositions, his attention : yet the protestant portion of Germany have received the whole with applause, and still, in their multiplied editions, continue to hail them with undiminished approbation ; while the translations of them extant in the various languages of Europe unequivocally bespeak the opinion of the foreigner. Nor seems it too much to add as a conclusion from what is seen and may be read, that, with the exception of the inspired writers, and two or three who, from the effects which they have produced, appear also to have written under the immediate dictate of the Divine Spirit, no one author ever contributed more to the increase of piety, and to the edification of his own nation, and of the religious world universally, than this pastor of St. Peter's, in Hamburg.

One particular merit of Sturm among his countrymen, though secondary perhaps in all but talent to his other deserts, was his assistance towards the improvement of that large part of the divine service of the reformed churches of Germany which consists in psalmody. This was one of his earliest and favourite tasks ; and his bold though just criticisms, united to his collections of hymns original and compiled, but always founded on that refinement of taste combined with de-

votional feelings which he strove to render familiar, are said to have given rise, in connexion with other favourable circumstances, to results of the highest utility to the present style of divine worship, as well as to the prevailing tenor of religious education.

It is sorrowful to be obliged to annex, that the talents and the virtues of Sturm were not sufficient to shield him from envy and enmity, but that they rather generated both. Let the names of his opponents sleep : they are forgotten perhaps in this world for ever : and I will not copy them from the reviews of the day, in which his answers to his adversaries, not less than his other publications, are so copiously praised. Yet who can learn without grief, that their assaults preyed upon his health, and perhaps hastened his end ! Farther observation seems needless, and might here be considered presumptuous or misplaced. The passing curiosity of the reader will be partially, at least, satisfied with these details : he will recollect, that the adventures of such a man as Sturm are only combats with the obduracy of the sinful and impenitent, and travels into the realms of criminality and distress ; and will be able to imagine more than ten times this bulk of sheets could contain. Yet for those who take a pleasure in the more minute accounts of religious experience, I hope soon to produce a relation more complete and correspondent to their wishes. Meanwhile, enough perhaps has been recorded to induce us all to desire and pray for a succession of CHRISTOPHER CHRISTIAN STURMS in every church of the Lord.

**THE**  
**AUTHOR'S PREFACE**

**TO THE**  
**SECOND EDITION OF THE ORIGINAL WORK.**

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ON the first publication of this work, I gave such an account of its nature and composition as I believed to be necessary for a right judgment and salutary use of it. For the benefit, however, of those readers to whom the first edition may remain unknown, I here repeat those remarks.

The larger portion or division of this volume consists of a series of moral contemplations, the occasion of which was furnished to me by the principal passages in the history of the sufferings of Jesus. I have taken pains throughout the whole to elucidate the verbal meaning of the narrative; though without introducing illustrations which are neither adapted to the knowledge and insight of the common christian, nor have any important influence in the essential of edification itself. My principal object has been to show the reader how he should make application of the sacred detail of the last sufferings of the Redeemer to his heart, and extract from it those lessons, warnings, and grounds of consolation, which lie therein. I am aware how easily it may occur, in regard to meditations of this kind, that, in the laudable desire of being affecting and edifying,

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we lose sight of the chief purpose of the scriptural relation, and draw deductions which are sometimes, indeed, satisfactory to the heart, but not always so to the understanding. Hence, I have endeavoured as much as possible to avoid this error, and to unite with the emotion of the heart the conviction of the mind also. In general, I think I have treated my subject agreeably to these principles, but whether in particular instances, and especially in respect to expression, I have, at all times, written intelligibly, and yet movingly enough, I leave to the decision of impartial and well-disposed readers. Of this much, however, I am certain, that in composing these Devotions my constant aim was so to think and to express myself, as seemed to me to be conformable to the sentiments and way of thinking of common christians themselves. And if I have now and then, perhaps, in certain passages departed from the doctrinal tone which ought to prevail in writings for edification; if I have now and then spoken with a certain degree of fire, I must ascribe this to the matter of which I was discoursing. For he who feels the high value of the atonement of Jesus, and the greatness of the love of our Redeemer, cannot possibly speak with the coldness with which a philosopher lectures upon merely speculative truths. It is impossible to apprehend and see into the affecting, the important, and the divine truths in the history of Jesus' sufferings, without being penetrated by those feelings which we must really possess in order to speak of them worthily. I am not ashamed to confess, that my soul has been extraordinarily affected by many particular circumstances of the sufferings of Jesus. And I have observed how much the sufferings of our Saviour would lose of their intrin-

sic weight; of their worth, of their consoling efficacy, were we to regard them merely in reference to the example which Jesus presents to us under them. With the true and full persuasion of my heart I have therefore sought to point out to my readers that which appertains to the atonement in the sufferings of Jesus, and thereon to ground the recommendation of godliness. And how soothing is it for me, that these contemplations have already made upon many the impression which I desired: that many through them have been confirmed in their convictions of the infinite value of the sufferings of Jesus, and at least for some minutes have been filled with pious resolutions and holy emotions! The written proofs of this fact which I hold in my hands are more precious to me than all the praises of the critics, who, besides, in our days, usually speak with enthusiasm of works of taste, but are wont to judge coldly and indifferently of books of piety.

The second division contains an explanatory paraphrase of the Gospel of Christ's sufferings, with brief applications to the heart. In the preparation of this part I have directed my views especially to unstudied readers. And as I did not consider myself justified in enlarging the narrative with more circumstances than are immediately expressed in the words of the Evangelists, I have, in most cases, approached to a literal translation, and only where it appeared unavoidably necessary added a few elucidations, and more strict definitions or determinations of the sense. The annexed practical inferences are to afford to the reader an opportunity of turning each truth to the benefit and improvement of his heart, and to suggest the means of perusing the scriptures with fruitful reflection. Methinks such

a paraphrase of the Bible, but above all of the New Testament, would be of the greatest advantage to common christians; and at least have this utility, that through its assistance the reader might be brought, in the easiest and most sensible manner, to meditate on the truths of religion, and to the exercise of practical christianity.

It is my heart-felt desire that God will be pleased to bless these contemplations to all who read them for the confirmation of their faith in Jesus, the once crucified and now exalted Saviour and Redeemer.

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**PART I.**

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**CONTEMPLATIONS**  
**ON THE**  
**SUFFERINGS**  
**OF**  
**JESUS CHRIST.**

**B**



INTRODUCTORY REFLECTIONS  
UPON  
THE HISTORY  
OF  
THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS.

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I.

*The Necessity for, and Benefits derived from, a Fruitful Remembrance of the Sufferings of Jesus.*

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.—HEB. xii. 3.

MY own heart commands me to remember the sufferings of Jesus, and I should evince little feeling of humanity, or of thankful love towards my Saviour, were I not often to turn my thoughts to a benefactor who has obtained for me, through his afflictions, such great felicity. Praise be to God, that I am not yet so insensate and lost that it is burdensome to me to employ myself in serious meditation on the sorrows of Christ my Redeemer; but that I can still gladly spend a few of the minutes of my life in reflecting upon myself in reference to my condition as a christian! Praise be to God, that I have this moment, to the exclusion of all other ideas, formed the resolution piously and earnestly to consider Jesus the crucified!

How truly needful to me are continual excitements



to godliness ! Alas ! my spirit is but too frequently slow to do good, and languid in the race of christianity ! I have often already experienced that the most striking encouragements make little impression upon my mind, and that I can remain cold when I ought to be inflamed, and unaffected when all around me should hurry me into wrapt emotion. I will now, however, hold up the sufferings of Jesus to my soul. This may perhaps work the wished-for effect upon my conscience.

O thou soul, that still submittest to be fettered by the false charms of vice, retire into thyself, and narrowly inspect that sin which thou deemest to be something profitable ! Wouldst thou know its form and nature, ponder upon the sorrows of Jesus. Can that possibly be a trifle which drew upon the All-Innocent such various pangs of mind and body ? Canst thou still judge it to be acting advantageously, when thou satisfiest thy wicked inclinations, seeing, as thou dost, how cruelly even on their account the Son of God was treated, and how shamefully abused ? Has sin still allurements for thee, when it was through this that the most beauteous among the children of men was deformed and mangled, the most guiltless punished and tortured, and the prince of life slain ? As often as such thoughts and propensities arise within thee, as represent the exercise of iniquity to be easy and pleasing, survey thy afflicted Redeemer ; and when thou shalt be touched to the quick with the sight of his torments, when the whole abomination and the whole misery of thy perdition shall stand before thy eyes, then resolve to persist in the practice of evil !—But how were this possible ? If thou reflectest with due devotion and thy utmost attention of mind, as becomes thee, upon the calamities of Jesus, thou wilt not be able to do aught

contrary to that which these sufferings of thy Saviour prescribe to thee. Thou wilt much rather seek without delay to fulfil the obligations which are thus laid upon thee, to die ever more and more to sin, and to live to righteousness: this will become thy constant endeavour. The agonies of Christ will shake thee with salutary alarm, when thou art on the point of committing any deed at variance with thy conscience; they will strengthen thee, when thou art weak and weary in the performance of heavenly acts; they will inspirit and refresh thee, when thou labourest under wrongs and misfortunes for godliness' sake; they will make thee comforted and of good cheer, when trouble and adversity approach thee.

Yes, my soul! here will be a consolatory experience for thee—days will inevitably come, that will not please thee; days when thou wilt be anxious for comfort. Even now, therefore, it is necessary that thou shouldst make the sufferings of Jesus the subject of thy daily meditation. For under such trying circumstances nothing can so powerfully raise up the dejected heart, or so strongly arm it against all impatience, pain, and terror, as the lively contemplation of the woes of Him who was the divine expiation. In His pangs and in His death thou wilt find the most efficacious of all motives for tranquillity and resignation. The agonized Redeemer teaches thee the grand truth, that the afflictions of this present time terminate in a blessed issue, and that they are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in thee.

And how will it be with thee in the hour of death, if thou draw not invigoration out of the living fountain of Jesus' sufferings, so as placidly, and full of trust, to surmount this last change, to which thy immediate existence subjects thee? A heart rightly for-

tified by meditating upon the Passion of Christ can exalt itself above all dread of dying; look death in the face without a shudder, at least without horror; and expire as cheerfully as Jesus did.

But thou perhaps, O christian! art not in such a situation that thou beholdest the grave actually open before thee, or that great and severe calamities demand from thee the display of an heroic temper? Thou both livest, and enjoyest thy life, without sustaining any particular trials. 'Tis well: such is the very epoch in which I would wish that thou mightest recollect with all earnestness the woes of the Only Begotten of the Most High. This season of joy and peace is perilous for the innocence of thy heart; and the sufferings of thy Redeemer are the only means by which thou canst be secure against this danger. Art thou exposed to the risk of being seduced into wickedness by the power of wealth? think of the misery of Jesus; see how poor he was, that he might secure better riches for thee and for us all: read in the necessities of the Lord the sentence of condemnation pronounced against those who strive insatiably after the possessions of the earth. Dost thou run the hazard of being carried away by the desire of honour? remember thy Saviour; remember the scorn and disgrace with which, notwithstanding his most upright and faultless conduct, he was overwhelmed. Art thou tempted to regard voluptuousness and pleasure as thy chief good? call Jesus to mind, who, though he might have commanded every joy, endured the cross and bore every contumely.

Yea, my Lord and my God! with holiness and fervour of soul will I meditate on thy sufferings—support me now, therefore, with thy grace; and through it let me be strengthened in faith, confirmed in virtue, and established in the hope of the life everlasting.

## II.

*The Frame of Mind proper for contemplating the Sufferings of Jesus.*

For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.—1 COR. ii. 2.

AM I at all in that state of mind in which Paul was when he preached the gospel at Corinth? Is my love towards the Redeemer so ardent, that the consideration of his sufferings and of his death obliterates within me all other ideas and reflections? Is it my highest wisdom to know him that died for me? Is it my most esteemed occupation to think of him who was crucified for my sake, and to fulfil the object of his work of redemption? Now, when in this my temporary solitude, I am about to trace, in serious meditation, the sufferings of Jesus; now is the fittest time for me to search my spirit, to bring my sentiments to the proof, and to investigate the nature and quality of my devotion. This much I already perceive, at the first glance that I cast into my heart, that I am still greatly behind my apostolic model, and far from testifying that seriousness, that piety, and that warmth in the contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus, which animated the bosom of Paul as often as he thought—and when did he not think?—of the sacrifice of Calvary. But whence arises this lukewarmness of my mind?—Perhaps I only superficially consider the momentous subject, without adequate attention, and without frequent repetition? Can I by any means imagine, that it is sufficient, if I snatch a few minutes from my busy restless life, and devote them to the retrospection of the divine afflictions? Can

I really persuade myself, that I have fulfilled my whole christian duty, when I cursorily call to recollection the external circumstances of the distresses of Jesus, without feeling their power in my heart, and without rendering them subservient to sanctification and godliness of conduct. First of all, therefore, it will be essentially requisite, that I pursue my meditations upon the sufferings of my Saviour with the utmost degree of application and earnestness of which I am capable, and that I carefully weigh their causes, character, views, and operations. But how can I support this course of salutary reflection, if I add not urgent prayer for illumination, holiness, and strength of spirit? For this reason, whenever I purpose to regard, with reverential and edifying observance, the history of my Redeemer's Passion, I will turn to God, bewailing the inability of my heart, the slothfulness of my piety, and my numerous mental distractions; and entreat him in his mercy to light the flame of devotion within me, and to replenish my soul with faith and love.

Yet how shall I be able to pray acceptably before God, and thus be qualified to contemplate profitably the sufferings of my Mediator, if I do not purify my mind from all worldly thoughts, and bring tranquillity of spirit to this act of religion? What can the word from the cross effect in the souls of those whose hearts are laden, while they listen to it, with worldly cares, or filled with a ruling affection for earthly possessions and earthly pleasures? As I am assured that here lies the cause why I have hitherto derived so little advantage from the sacred occupation in question, I will henceforth constantly hold in memory those principles, according to which the awful scenes of the atonement must alone be viewed by me, and from time

to time prove myself whether or not I do justice to them.

I will, as oft as I apply my mind to the contemplation of the persecuted Jesus, renounce the pleasures that enchain my heart, or obstruct the flow of its better feelings.

I will devote particular industry to the examination of the great truths which this mournful portion of the gospel presents to my reverential research. I will gaze steadfastly and long upon the virtues which shine with so bright a splendour through the torments and death of the Saviour.

I will abandon myself to all those tender and holy emotions which the sufferings of Jesus are so capable of producing in a sensible heart.

I will ever consider the heavy obligation under which I lie, on account of the benefits accruing to me from all the pangs that Christ endured.

I will form a firm resolve to tread in the footsteps of my suffering Redeemer.

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### III.

#### *The Scope of the Sufferings of Jesus.*

Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.—TITUS, ii. 14.

It is very common with me to regard the afflictions of my Redeemer on the consolatory side, without always considering the obligations which are laid upon me by these his sufferings. Certain and valuable as

is the assurance, that Jesus through his pangs has reconciled us with God, and made atonement for our iniquities; it is equally so, that he has thus likewise freed us from the servitude of sin, and obtained for us the power of leading a holy and righteous life in the present world.—Upon this particular design of the sufferings of my Saviour I will now, in this hour of calm retirement, reflect.

In them the wrath of God against sin openly manifested itself, in the most awful manner. The cross of Christ is a clear mirror, in which we may behold God's earnestness, and the inflexibility of his justice. By what more impressive way could he have terrified us from sin, than by punishing it with such severity in his own beloved Son? Whoever considers this example of the divine anger with attention will be naturally led to the conclusion, if it be so with the green wood, how will it be with the dry? Has the Son of God, the innocent, the righteous, been obliged to undergo so many torments, though only standing in the sinner's place, what will hereafter occur to me, if I have no share in the fruits of these agonies, and am myself compelled to bear the chastisement of my own wickedness? What hope can I, as an unrepentant transgressor, indulge, that I shall escape the threats of the sacred word, since they were fulfilled in such strict and rigid punctuality in the person of Jesus, who was but our surety?—And if I consider that which, by submitting to this sacrifice, Jesus has effected for my good, the incalculable obligation, by which I am bound to him, must appear self-evident: for how could I possibly be so void of feeling, as not to be penetrated with gratitude and reciprocal affection, at the view of such love as Christ has evinced towards me? How could I by

any means carry injustice so far, as to act contrary to a duty so pressing as that to which my Redeemer has subjected me?

Yet my Saviour has not only, through his death, exhibited to me the most persuasive motives for new obedience, but he has also furnished me with the needful assistance to that end. As long as I am left to my own powers, it is in vain to put instigations to duty before my eyes; and unavailing for me to form good resolutions, or to endeavour to follow the heavenly laws. God himself must come to the aid of my inability through his spirit, if I am to arrive at sanctification. But could I expect such a grace from the Lord, while I compelled his equity to be at enmity with me? Now, however, since Jesus, through his death, has satisfied this justice, all the sources of celestial bliss are again opened to me, and I am furnished with the most prevailing and certain means of reformation and holiness.

I will not, therefore, disjoin those things which God, in the redemption through Christ, has so closely united together. Be this salvation of Jesus then at once for me the most hallowed medium of sanctification, and the fountain of my atonement. Does my conscience disquiet me, does the recollection of my sins terrify me? I will hasten to Jesus. From him I shall not in vain seek comfort and rest for my soul: he has paid the penalty of my unrighteousness, appeased the displeasure of the Almighty, and procured for me his favour and everlasting felicity. That which my Saviour was constrained to endure, in order to accomplish this undertaking, must remain the constant object of my thoughts.—Terribly did God show his detestation for sin, since it was his only-begotten upon



whom he executed his vengeance against it. Let this instance of his zealous wrath serve as a warning to me, that I may not experience something worse. With equal diligence will I also recollect how deeply I am indebted to Jesus, and what sort of love he has displayed for me, by voluntarily resigning himself on my account to such bitter sufferings, in order that this may be a lively incitement to me to love him in return, and to exercise all constancy and ardour in that obedience, which he has made so much my duty. My weakness need not frighten me in this so excellent intention: I am able to do every thing through him, who renders my feebleness strong. The death of Jesus has revealed for me a spring, out of which I can draw all resources necessary for a blessed existence and godly demeanour. The Omnipotent, who through Jesus is reconciled to me, will grant to me his spirit, if I only entreat him for it. And how happy I shall be, when I have obtained this gift! I shall then grow daily in piety, and be able to solace myself with the certain hope of everlasting life. God, who has commenced his work in me, will also finish it; and his grace, which has here prepared me for blessedness, will hereafter bring me to its fruition.

## CONTEMPLATION I.

### *The Entrance of Jesus into the Garden of the Mount of Olives.*

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Kedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place; for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.—JOHN, xviii. 1, 2.

THIS was the last time that Jesus visited the Mount of Olives, where he had passed so many waking nights in prayer to his heavenly Father. The retreat, which in his better days he had chosen for still communion with God, was now sought by him on the approach of the hours of anguish, which were coming so speedily upon him, to prepare himself to suffer. Jerusalem, that rendezvous of sins and tumultuous pleasures, appeared to him to be no place where he could spend his last night of earthly life in that frame of mind which his impending fate required. He knew that a yet more severe conflict than any he had hitherto endured awaited him, with which he desired to struggle unattended by many witnesses. He retired, therefore, to a solitary spot, accompanied only by those few dear friends who had till now taken a share in all his troubles. He went to the Mount of Olives in the firm resolve to be an offering for the sins of the world, and

to submit to all the calamities to which his Father should that night doom him.

How instructive is this scene of the sufferings of Jesus! If I mark his conduct on entering into the garden of the Mount of Olives, I may fully learn how I ought to demean myself in the weightiest affairs, and in such concerns especially as regard my eternal salvation. In the tumult of the town, amid gaiety and revelry, it is scarcely in my power duly to meditate upon topics of this high importance; at least I am always in danger of being diverted from the train of my reflections, and of having my thoughts diverted to other objects. When, therefore, I would address myself to the Deity, or reflect upon my past sins, or prepare myself for death, I must flee all those places where I might be exposed to external distractions. My usual amusements, even my most innocent associates, must not be in this respect too dear to me: I must tear myself away from them, withdraw into my closet, and there in secret address my Father who is in heaven. Those places where, in our days of prosperity, we have executed works of vanity, will afford us little alleviation in the season of need: the remembrance of them, on the contrary, will rather occasion shame and painful regret. But that spot where I had formerly occupied myself in solitude with God, or prayed with those whom I esteem, or performed a good work, will greatly redound to my encouragement in the hour of trouble or of death. Thus will the small chamber in which I die be the place of my ascension to heaven, as the Mount of Olives was that of Jesus.

Would that I might also learn from my Saviour the art of dying tranquilly and blessedly!—I shall, how-

ever, be capable of being as happy in death as he was, if I can then say with truth, "Father! I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."—John, xvii. 4. My Redeemer went not to his death till he had done all that his mediatorial office, and his connexion with his disciples, required from him. He devoted even the last days of his existence in the flesh to warn his followers, to instruct, and to comfort them. Now in this, at all events, I will imitate him. The more uncertain the day of my dissolution is, the more earnestly will I dedicate every hour to the performance of my great temporal business. I will timely provide for my house, my family, and my soul. Then I may meet my end as calmly as Jesus, nor need I to be downcast on account of any calamities which I shall see drawing near to me: so far from this, it will be actually within my power to encourage those who in the smiling period of my life contributed to my joys, as my children, my friends, my companions; and to teach them, even in evil times, how to keep a good heart.

And how exceedingly consolatory to me likewise is this portion of the sufferings of the Son of God! This act of my Redeemer laid the foundation of all the blessings which I owe to his meritorious afflictions. But for this his voluntary GOING TO DEATH I should have remained without rescue. As he, however, did not hesitate to meet his sufferings, so can I, on my part, rest perfectly assured of my salvation.

True and faithful Saviour! thanks, thanks be to thee for the free-will obedience, which thou manifestedst through thy ready advance to thy fatal doom. Thanks be to thee for the comfort which thou didst obtain for me too in my last pangs. Ah! I likewise

have a progress to make, a sore and heavy progress through the gloomy vale of the grave to thy judgment-seat. I also shall be compelled to leave my earthly native land, and all my beloved friends. O! then, Lord Jesus! strengthen me, and let me depart from the world as full of joyfulness and magnanimity as thyself.

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## CONTEMPLATION II.

### *The Agony of Christ on the Mount of Olives.*

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples: Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.—MATH. xxvi. 36, 37, 38. LUKE, xxii. 44.

WHAT a change!—a few minutes since, as he ascended the Mount of Olives, my Saviour was so full of joy and heroic courage! Now he is all at once sad, and begins to despond! His soul, which had before felt nothing but peace and quiet, is suddenly attacked with anguish and affliction. It must have been something most extraordinary that could thus have destroyed his steady frame of temper, and deprived him of his wonted unalterable composure. Let me regard my Redeemer as I will, under all the events and vicissitudes of his life, I ever find him in that still, unshaken

calmness of spirit, which arises out of perfect innocence of heart.—Externally I can discover nought which should thus have agitated him, and struck him, as it were, to the ground. The fear of death it could not be. Why should he have been terrified for death, who possessed a sinless nature, and this superiority above all mortals, that his death should redound to the bliss of all mankind? Why should he have trembled before any execution, however infamous in common estimation, and torturing in itself, through whose strength each witness to the faith, each champion in the host of martyrdom, was made fit and strong to die with gladness and magnanimity? When I see a man who on the near approach of death quakes in all the members of his body, combats to the exhaustion of all his corporeal powers with the anguish of dissolution, and lies mentally wracked to the most violent extremity with the dread of impending eternity, the spectacle surprises me not. This expiring wretch is a sinner, for whom death and the consequent judgment must of necessity be terrific. But Jesus was innocent, unspotted, and free from all sin; and could, therefore, fear no sentence of the tribunal of God. And yet his pure unsullied soul was cast down—he shook in every limb—and his body dripped with a bloody sweat: he felt what no mortal ever felt in like measure; a distress which quite subdued him, and brought his vital being almost to the grave!

Who can conceive this mystery?—Nevertheless, the very incomprehensibility of this grief may lead me to the causes of it. Without doubt now was that hour of judgment, which was to smite the surety and bondsman of the whole human race. In this time of anguish the Lord cast upon him all our transgressions, and

with judicial strictness fulfilled in him the aggregated punishment, which a world replete with iniquity had merited. Before his all-seeing eye passed in terrible review each mortal crime, from the first sin of Adam to the last which the latest inhabitant of the terrestrial ball shall commit. The expiring pangs of all the dying, and their dread of death—the grave, and the final doom—all the nameless torments which the awakened conscience of a sinner can experience—all this lay on him, and oppressed him to the earth. Ah! what agony must my Saviour have endured in this indescribable situation! Is it frightful when a sinner is judged for his own misdeeds; is it an unutterable misery when our own iniquities seize us, and God for them alone chastises us in his anger? How insupportable would it be, if the united sins of the vast multitudes of the entire globe—huge as a mountain, the top of which we can hardly discern, far less see over—were given to one of us to bear! Is it then a wonder if Jesus trembles here in his utmost need, struggles, as it were, with death, and sinks before the wrath of the Judge of the earth? O miserable me!—how would it have been with me had I occupied my Mediator's place? If the All-holy was compelled to grieve and despond under the judgment of God, what a death, what despair, what anguish of hell itself must not I have felt? Ah! a single look of the enraged Judge would have crushed me to pieces; a single word of his sentence would have hurled me into the pit of the damned!

Oh! by me, by me be Thou blessed and praised without end, Thou who hast borne the incalculable sins of the world, who hast borne also my sins! In thy death-pangs, in thy dread trepidation and anguish, in

thy bloody sweat I bless thee, Lamb of God ! bruised and afflicted for me !

But with much fear, and a palpitating heart, it is that I turn to thee my alarmed thoughts. I behold thy unspeakable sufferings, and I am terrified at myself. So great are my faults, so wholly corrupted is my soul, such an abomination are my iniquities before the Lord, that thou, eternal Son of God ! even on account of my transgressions art thus direfully troubled and tormented ! Can I now still persuade myself that it is a small matter to offend the Omnipotent ? Ah ! careless sinner that I am, how often have I already broken the law of the Most High, without considering what an insupportable load the anger of Heaven is, and that by every violation of piety I was challenging the avenging justice of the Almighty ! I will now at last rouse myself out of my slumber to reflection. Let thy agony, O Jesus ! teach me to feel the real enormity of my sins, the insufferableness of thy displeasure, and the sternness of thy decrees of retribution. On every inclination to sin that arises within me, on every outrage of which I am guilty against thy statutes, I will remember thy anguish, and tremble. Yes, I will tremble, but I will not despair. When in the hour of temptation my startled conscience represents to me the crowd of my past offences, when I wrestle with doubt and sorrow, when no comfort can refresh my stricken heart, when cold drops of sweat, distilled by acute pain, stand thick on my shattered frame, when terrors of all kinds run through my bones—oh ! then, even then, I will not despair. Thy agony on the Mount of Olives shall convince me that God will not enter into judgment with me, nor deal with me according to my sins.



Jesus, my Lord and my God ! be praised for this consolation with which thou hast furnished me through thy awful passion. As often as I weep over my sins, I will praise thee that I can weep, not without comfort. As often as my misdeeds affright me, I will praise thee, that for thy agony's sake I can find ease. Hereafter, in the midst of the perturbations of my remembering conscience, when in my death-struggle my soul contends with overpowering fear ; in thy judgment, when I stand before thy throne to hear my sentence ; then will I still thank thee, that thou in thy mortal agony, and in the judgment that was held over thee, didst strengthen my spirit, and obtain for me acquittal.

Perhaps there is at this moment, in some corner, a dying sinner, who in his deep anguish seeks thy countenance, O Jesus ! Have mercy, Christ ! upon this miserable being. Have mercy upon his soul, and let him not go down into perdition. For the sake of thy own death-pangs be gracious to him, and grant him thy peace, O Jesus ! O Jesus !

## CONTEMPLATION III.

*The Conduct of Jesus towards his Heavenly Father.*

And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.—MAT. xxvi. 39. 42. 44.

AMID all the unspeakable torment of mind which Jesus suffered during his stay in Gethsamene, he still appeared in his divine greatness. How much soever the burden of God's wrath which lay upon him crushed him to the ground, his soul still took courage, and was strongly invigorated through his confident reliance upon his Father. Bitter as his sufferings were to him, still he submitted himself with tranquil composure to his fate, and retained his ever equal and unchangeable willingness to offer himself up to the death of atonement. His soul, sorrowful even unto the last sickness of the body, found in prayer alleviation for its troubles. He prayed for the shortening of his sore distresses, beneath which he was in danger of perishing. Yet, however anxiously he longed after refreshment, still he abandoned himself to the will of his Father, which he incessantly kept in view as his grand aim, and seemed only on this account to care for solace, that he might receive new force to meet the pangs that yet awaited him.

Ah ! now I well perceive how hard his strife was to him. He was throughout his whole life so poor, surrounded by so many temptations and persecutions ! And all these calamities he steadfastly bore, nor ever supplicated for their allayment or abbreviation. But here his human nature was too weak to hold out against the attack of such multiplied anguish. Hence he prayed at various times so ardently, that this cup, this his apportioned suffering, might pass away from him. How greatly his conduct puts me to shame ! When only a small trouble hangs over me, how impatient and unbelieving is my heart ! And were it to please the Lord to load me with a large measure of distresses, how little should I then show myself like to my Redeemer ! I will, however, learn from thee, my Saviour ! the art of suffering tranquilly and courageously.

With what filial affiance thou turnedst to thy Father ! He seemed to have renounced his love to thee, when in the judge's characteristic wrath he attached to thee all the penalties of all sins. But thou remainedst notwithstanding devoted to him, with all that exceeding tenderness with which thy whole heart was filled. Thou calledst him also by the sweet paternal name, even when in his judicial attribute he let thee know his full severity. Come then over me what anguish there may, I will not be discomfited, nor misconceive the goodness of thy ways, nor swerve from the love of thy eternal Sire. Even then, when thou wilt deal with me as my judge, and I shall be shrinking under thy heavy chastising hand—even then I will say, Abba, Father ! And I may say so, for thou hast gained for me the right to name the omnipotent Judge my Father !—But this filial reliance of the worshipping

Mediator was conjoined with the deepest humility, and the most punctual obedience. On his knees, his face in the dust, he lay and sighed forth his straitened heart upwards to God. Ah! I, who am but ashes, but dust itself, how can I bow myself lowly enough before the Majesty of heaven? How can my heart be sufficiently smitten and humbled, when the *Lord over all*, the ONE quite guiltless, sunk into such a depth of debasement?—And can I behold my Jesus in such submissive resignation, over and over again groaning from his inmost bosom, without thinking upon my own indolent, cold, haughty heart? Thrice did he address himself in most imploring entreaty to his Father. He ceased not to call upon him till the *INVOKED* evinced himself inclined to hear. And shall I be spiritless, if after crying out to him a few times, he lend no ear to me? No, I will hope in him, I will not move from him. At last, I know, he will quicken my heart with his grace, however long it may be previously sighed for. Yes, when I have called to him for a sufficient space, my Father will ultimately send an angel to strengthen me. He will raise up a friend that shall have much sympathy towards me, and show me great affection; or at all events he will command, at my death, one of the ministering messengers of his throne to descend to me, who will carry my redeemed soul into the lap of everlasting bliss.

Perhaps I am at this moment so happy as to feel nothing of that remorse of conscience, of that grief, of that melancholy which can overthrow even the strongest Christian. But who can tell whether the hour be not nearer than I suppose—that fearful excruciating hour—in which I shall have to taste some drops of the bitter cup which my Saviour drained to the very lees?

And may it not come to pass, on my death-bed, that my conscience, so long torpid, shall awake, and my committed sins weigh upon me like a pile of many hills? Cannot a thousand cases occur, in which I may be compelled without counsel, and without aid, to languish under the poignancy of my afflictions? Then at least I shall be aware how needful it is that we should prepare ourselves, in our days of pleasantness, for the time of woe; and seek in our prosperity the Lord, whom in adversity we desire to have as our consolation. Then I shall acknowledge that a heart directed to God, being able to hold assurance of his love, is the best palliative in calamity. Henceforward, therefore, shall my Saviour's example instruct me to be comforted, even under the most trying and distressing events. Prayer and silent intercourse with God shall remain my constant and ever recurring day's occupation. Then should the cup of anguish be presented, at the bitterness of which my whole nature shall shudder and revolt, still I will accept it with calm composure, and exclaim in imitation of my Saviour, Shall I not drink the cup which my Father has given me to drink? Yes, yes, my Father! I will drink it—not my will, but thy will be done!

## CONTEMPLATION IV.

*The Conduct of Jesus during his Agony towards his Disciples.*

And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simou, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour? Watch ye, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation: the spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy); neither wist they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.—MARK, xiv. 37—42.

ON all sides my Jesus is full of anguish and pain. Within him is a desponding spirit; above him an angry judge; around him a small number of weak timorous friends. Any one of these circumstances might have deprived the boldest and most constant saint of all courage and serenity. But on every occasion my Redeemer evinces the insuperable champion. The despondency of his soul he overcame through patience and confident reliance upon his Father. To the severity of his doom he opposed his innocence, his resignation, and his supplicating prayers—and to his tottering friends he testified the most indulgent love. This latter proof of his tenderness shall be the subject of my present meditation. What greatness, alike of mind and heart, does not Jesus manifest under all the acute sensations of his awful passion! Amid so many assaults, peculiarly and solely his own, it would not

have been surprising if he had remembered only himself, and abandoned his friends to their fate ; but he loved his adherents to the very end. Even in the hour when all his thoughts were occupied with God, he did not forget his disciples, but regarded them with a fondness that must strike us with astonishment. Weak as they had shown themselves under temptation, he ceased not lovingly to remind them of their duty, to provide for their safety, and to bear with their frailties. Jesus had surmounted the first hard conflict. Worn out by such a variety of griefs, he returned, as we may well suppose, with fainting steps to his chosen attendants—but he found them asleep. A second time he departed from them a few paces. Dismay fell upon him ; he wrestled with death. He called to his Father with fervent supplication, and prayer, and floods of tears. He came back, as one half dead, to his elected followers. And, behold—they slept : they knew not what to answer to him on account of their drowsiness ! For the third time Jesus goes to the place of combat to drink the last remains of the bitter cup of the cross. And as he again, on his returning, sees his disciples in deep slumber, he says, “ Sleep on now, and take your rest : it is enough, the hour is come ; behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.” And thus awaking them, he adds, “ Rise up, let us go ; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.” Could Jesus possibly have acted with greater mildness, with greater forbearance towards his dull and indolent followers ? Their repeated failings did not weary him, their excessive slothfulness did not irritate him. Instead of reproaching them with their inattention and their carelessness in the sharpest terms, as human nature would have done, he imparted to them the most gentle ad-

monitions, and exemplified towards them the most invincible patience. How little, my Saviour, am I similar to thee in this! I have often observed, that the small burden of my sufferings excites me to vehemence of temper; and have experienced how easily, in my afflictions, I forget the obligations of love and goodness which I owe towards my neighbour. The longer my sufferings continue the more peevish and morose I am wont to become, the more sternly I judge the slightest faults of my friends, and the more discontented I am with all that is near me and about me. I fancy at least that I merit all indulgence, if, in my tribulations, I consider merely myself. Yet ought I not so much the more to practise these exercises of affection towards my brethren, since thou, my Redeemer! bearest with me in all my weaknesses with such wonderful patience, and amid all my repeated offences rejectest me not from thy countenance? Ah! how often do indolence and coldness mingle with my devotion? How often do I slumber when my flesh rebels? And what would become of me if thou wert to abandon me to my wretchedness? Ah! I acknowledge it, my Saviour! it is thy grace which still holds me upright, which encourages me, which so powerfully fortifies me that I am able to stand, and which draws me back, as with a strong arm, from the abyss of destruction, to which, in the recklessness of sin, I am ever approaching anew. Oh! cease not, my Redeemer! to grant to me thy favour, to treat me with long enduring benignity, and to rouse me out of my torpor. Oh! never, never give me over to my own heart, never to the imbecility of my flesh. I am always in danger of falling through temptation into utter perdition when thou turnest thy eye and thy



assistance from me. I now beg to commend myself to this thy supporting grace for all the hours and moments of futurity. Graciously, in thy mercy, listen to the entreaty I now make. How easily may I, in my intercourse with the world, be misled into sin ! I know not what trials are even this day destined for me. In reliance, therefore, upon thee, my God and my Saviour ! I will this day enter again into the circle of my fellow-mortals ; and, in all the distractions incident to my condition, never lose thee out of my sight. And should I perceive any of my friends or brethren struggling under grievous trials, I will, as far as I am able, strive to lighten their distress : and, if I can do nothing more, I will pray for them, encourage them, comfort them. Strengthen me to this end, my Redeemer, through thy all availing grace.

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## CONTEMPLATION V.

### *The Approach of the Betrayer.*

And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.—MAT. xxvi. 47.

SCARCELY were the ensanguined drops on the brow of Jesus dry, scarcely had he recovered himself a little from the assault of his late overpowering agony, when a new storm arose to prove his heroic magnanimity. He was still employed in invigorating his weak, heartless friends, when the moment arrived in which he

himself needed fresh strength and comfort. Could aught have farther agitated his already so exhausted body, it would have been the view of Judas, who, at the head of the impious foes of the Most High, was advancing with the ruthless purpose of delivering up his Lord and Master into the vile hands of those blood-thirsty miscreants. What melancholy thoughts must have started in the soul of Jesus, when he saw, in the person of his disciple and supposed friend, his betrayer and worst enemy before him ! How must his heart have then bled, that soft philanthropic heart, which on every transgression of his beloved associates, nay, at the sight of every sinner, was so deeply affected ! With what a pitying look would he regard this fallen, low sunk man ! And, ah ! O Judas ! couldst thou behold the signs of the pangs of death, and of the sweat of blood on the face of thy best benefactor, thy kind teacher, Christ, without terror and vehement trepidation, that thou soughtest to plunge him, if thou wast able, into still greater torment ? Couldst thou contemplate thy faithful, guiltless guide, now the victim of thy wickedness, without desiring to be bound in his stead ? Couldst thou observe his countenance, on which the most divine innocence and the most tranquil resignation were imprinted, without feeling the keenest pangs of conscience ? Couldst thou approach thy Lord without sinking at every step to the earth ? Couldst thou—ah ! yes, thou couldst do all, after thou hadst yielded thy soul to the infamous dominion of avarice. Thy conscience was seared, thy heart hardened, and every sentiment of righteousness within thee was stifled. With all the abhorrence of which my soul is capable do I reflect upon this traitor to Jesus. No, never would I have acted thus ; never would I have

treated in so base a manner my most affectionate master, my most disinterested instructor, my dearest, tenderest friend. No, if I at all know my own heart, I would never have betrayed my Jesus. But have I a just knowledge of myself? May I trust my own feelings of right and wrong? This much, however, notwithstanding my boasting, I surely do know, that, if even my heart be incapable of literally committing such a dreadful enormity of vice, I may perhaps, in a more refined way, be a partaker in the same guilt. Have I not, in reality, likewise a heart that loves too extravagantly the fallacious glitter of worldly prosperity? and how little may then be wanting to seduce me into a degree of guilt equal to that of Judas himself? Even though my conscience tells me that it is impossible for me to behave with such monstrous cruelty and inhumanity, still I may in various modes become a Judas, and every hour may seduce me into the terrible treason of being faithless to my Redeemer. I betray Jesus, when for the sake of prosperity, friendship, or the world, I stain my soul with sin, and prove a recreant to godliness and the innate monitor of my spirit;—I betray Jesus, when I use holiness as a mantle for my vicious propensities;—I betray Jesus, when, under the semblance of courteousness and kindness, I seek to injure any of his members;—I betray Jesus, when I lightly value or underrate his doctrines or his sufferings, or join with the scorers in deriding the gospel;—I betray Jesus, when I mislead others into infidelity and perjury against God and Christ.

Now, then, I will no longer accuse Judas; I will accuse myself. Alas! I also carry within me a faithless, treacherous heart. I have only a few steps more to take in the path of wickedness, and I shall have over-

taken the betrayer of Jesus in his horrible wickedness. I will, therefore, take warning from this perfidious wretch, carefully to flee every probable occasion of peril to my soul. The love of terrestrial things shall never strike such deep root in my affections as to cause me to prefer them to my religion, my conscience, my salvation. But, oh! do thou then thyself preserve me, thou Beginner and Completer of my faith! that I may not have a perverse and deceitful spirit, deserting thee, and going over to the enemies of thy cross. Forgive me, O Jesus! for the sake of thy numberless sorrows, forgive me, if hitherto I have not kept thee within my continual observance, or have otherwise abused thy grace. Even for my false faithless heart thou sufferedst: be thou, my God! therefore gracious to me, and withdraw not from me the favour of thy countenance.

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## CONTEMPLATION VI.

*The Miracle wrought by Jesus upon those that came to take him.*

Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon as he had said unto them, I am he, *they went backward, and fell to the ground.* Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? and they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.—JOHN, xviii. 4—8.

HITHERTO I have beheld Jesus in the utmost apparent feebleness and languor, and overcome by the

diversified sufferings, which, as the surety of man, he was compelled, in pursuance of his office, to endure. Now, however, I see a ray of his divine majesty : I see him as the God of might, that needs but to speak the word, and his foes perish before his face. A great company of his declared enemies, with the most insulting barbarity, rushed into the garden, hallowed by his sorrows, to search for Jesus. He stepped undauntedly forward, and cried out to them, Whom seek ye? To their audacious reply, Christ, with sublime dignity in his countenance, answered, I am he. And these strong-armed assailants shrunk back, and fell to the ground ! I mistake thee not, my Redeemer ! in thy godly exaltation. When, indeed, on the Mount of Olives thou sunkest under the burden of the anger of the Lord, when thou trembledest and wast intimidated, then I demanded of myself in silence, Is this the God of strength, that gives to all creatures life, breath, and vigour ? Is this he at whose nod all created things must cease to be, and all sinners despair ? Yes, thou art he : this miracle testifies the omnipotence that dwells within thee. What a victory didst thou obtain over the malice of thy adversaries ! Proud in their reliance upon their force, upon their numbers, upon their weapons, they advanced in hostile array against the little unarmed escort of thy disciples. Certain of an easy victory, they already in their atrocity exulted in the joy of having vanquished thee and scattered thy adherents. But how well broughtest thou their haughty purposes to shame ! A word out of thy mouth struck them prostrate, and these lofty speakers fell as if beaten down to the earth by a thunderbolt, and awaited from thy grace the renewal of life. Verily it was grace of my Jesus that they were only frightened, not hurt ; only stupified and stunned, not killed.

He exhibited what he could have done had he chosen to act according to his power. But the obdurate wretches acknowledged neither his power nor his goodness. Scarcely had the ability to rise been granted to them, when they again prepared to execute their treacherous designs. The betrayer, nowise deterred by this overthrow, which he himself most probably shared with the companions of his subtle villany, approached to kiss his beneficent Master, and thus give the signal that it was time to lay violent hands upon the Son of God. And immediately the rest followed and seized Jesus.

These first enemies of our Saviour are a type of all the despisers of Jesus, and of the grace and favour of Christ. How often does the Lord, through sickness and other seeming accidents, perplex and disturb his foes ! How often does he bring them close to the grave, in order, through the terror of the judgment and of eternity, to startle and arrest them in their flagitious pursuits ! Yet seldom does he succeed ; for his inscrutable justice warns, but bends not the free-will. No sooner have they again gathered their strength and drawn their relieved breath, than they continue with their odious and obstinate hearts, to avert themselves afar from their God. The thief applies his restored faculties to perpetrate new robberies, or to multiply and extend his frauds ; the man of lust prosecutes with augmented zest the gratification of his brutal appetites ; the murderer and the misanthrope repeat their former deeds of blood and hatred ; and the unbeliever again pours forth his wonted curses against his Maker and his brethren. Yet weighty cause have ye, insensate fools ! to be alarmed for your impending fate. Enter only into your hearts, and examine their de-

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plorable condition. To what torments, unless ye speedily take heed, must ye not hereafter be a prey, when the Lord, whom ye defy, shall come at last in great power and glory? If his opponents sank to the dust when a syllable passed from his mortal lips, what will become of you when he shall appear as your immortal judge? How direfully will ye be confounded when he shall say to you, I am he whom ye rejected and contemned; I am he whom, in the person of my members, ye so grievously abused and ill treated; I am he whom ye crucified by your sins: depart from me all ye workers of iniquity! But to me it is beyond all measure consolatory, when I consider the conduct of Jesus in this instance towards his disciples, and his fond solicitude for their welfare. They were now in the greatest danger not only of losing their master, but of becoming themselves the sacrifice of flagitiousness. Nothing else was to be conjectured than that the persecutors of their sacred leader would possess themselves of his followers also, to sweep off at once the professors as well as the founder of a religion so repugnant to their prejudices and principles. But Jesus took his helpless partisans under his protection—that protection which is perfect defence. He saw that his beloved would not be firm enough to accompany him to death; he knew how indispensable their presence in the world was, as, after his death, they were to be the witnesses of his resurrection: hence he liberated them from the peril to which they were exposed. But for himself, he tendered with unshaken resolution and real heroic magnanimity his hands to the fetters, his person to indescribable injuries, and his life to death.

O strong, incalculable love! how lightened does my heart feel itself when I reflect upon thee, and when I

appropriate to myself the consolations which, even for my circumstances, are in thee so effectually inherent ! I can be wholly tranquillized even when the extreme vehemence of deadly enmity rises up against me, or imminent hazards, in which I might be destroyed, threaten me. The Lord is my trust and my strength, my help in every need that can befall me. I have many a time been taught in my life how efficient my Redeemer is, even then, to rescue me, when I seem to be already every way encompassed with misery. I will hope in him perpetually ; he will assist me under all exigencies. Perhaps I have yet other cares which disquiet me ; perhaps I have children who are exposed to seduction ; friends, perhaps, destitute of all aid ; perhaps the cause of the church of Jesus, so sorely straitened, so violently attacked, may inspire me with mournful thoughts ; but I will let nothing cast me down. The Lord will be gracious to guard the innocence of those who are dear to me, and whom I delight to call mine. His word, his worshippers, and his whole congregation, he will screen from all assaults of their foes. If he could formerly, in his humiliation, command his furious adversaries to leave his disciples untouched, and they were not able to disobey ; oh ! then, far more will he now, being exalted above all the heavens, possess the power to bring the councils of his opposers to nought. The city of God, with her burghers, will remain in peace ; for the Lord is there, and therefore shall she abide well. His enemies must wail, and all the strong fall, when he lets his voice be heard. The Lord Zabaoth is with us. Hallelujah !



## CONTEMPLATION VII.

*Jesus' Voluntary Surrender of himself into the Hands of his Enemies.*

Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath : the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? Then the band, and the captain, and the officers of the Jews, took Jesus and bound him.—JOHN, xviii. 10, 11, 12.

ONE of the most consolatory and important truths which the sufferings of Jesus teach me is this, that I may be convinced that my blessed Propitiator underwent them of his own free-will. Had the sufferings of Christ arisen merely from natural causes and consequences, I must always have remained in doubt whether my atonement had been thereby achieved. At least I must have regarded this atonement not as the main end, but as a subordinate motive for the mission of Jesus into the world. But all the history of his sufferings tends to convince me, that he took upon himself the whole from independent choice, and the most noble-minded determination to endure them for the salvation of mankind. In testimony of this free will, he hastened with joy to meet his death. He could have prevented the band of foes, who, at his word, fell to the ground, from rising up again, to defile him with their base intemperate hands. He could even have armed the small number of his friends with celestial force to spread devastation and horror among the invaders of his peace. It had been but a word,

and innumerable angels would have descended, and, with invisible power, arrested the reckless steps of his fierce pursuers. How easily could the Lord of nature have employed all the elements as instruments of his vengeance! Yet, why use external aid? His own innate omnipotence, through which he had already conquered whole legions of devils, brought back the dead to life, and so often frustrated the wiles and tricks of his opposers—this divine might he could now have applied to cover with merited infamy and chastisement the malignity of them who sought to murder him. At his mandate, the earth would have opened and totally swallowed up this ungodly race. At his bidding, fire would have fallen from the heavens and consumed them. His mere look could have hurled the fool-hardy gang of madmen into their primitive nothingness. But he did not here avail himself of any of these means to procure his liberty. On the contrary, when his disciples at first attempted to make armed resistance, and Peter wounded one of the hostile intruders, Jesus forbade the defence, and healed the maimed servant. All the circumstances of his capture testified the spontaneous consent with which he offered himself up a sacrifice for the world. The cup which my father has given me, said he, shall I not drink it? And what a bitter brim-full cup it was which his Father presented to him! But still he was willing to drink it. Yes, unfathomable love towards the progeny of Adam induced him even to desire it with eagerness. He would not be spared. He would not accept joy, that he might endure the cross. He wished to become a victim to death for man. What magnanimity, what philanthropy was this!

Salvation to you, O sinners! Salvation also to me!

Now I need not despond, though my conscience should terrify me with the future wrath of the judge. Voluntarily has Jesus subjected himself to the punishment which I ought to bear. Voluntarily has he, as the appointed offering of my God, allowed my sins to be reckoned to himself. With free and mature deliberation, he proceeded to his death, and undertook all that was required for the atonement of the human race. If I had now no other, or no stronger proof of my justification, this thought would of itself confirm me in my faith in the crucified Eternal. I am atoned, yes, I am atoned before God; for my Jesus suffered of his own perfect and unconstrained accord!

But wherefore, under the little troubles that are assigned to me, am I not so minded as Jesus was? Wherefore do I not as willingly, as composedly take the cross upon me? Wherefore do not I also encounter my distresses with the same magnanimous resolution? Ah! with what compulsion, with what murmurs, do I, on the contrary, submit to the afflictions which are appointed to me. Even trifling accidents, if they chance to be disagreeable to me, fill my heart with discontented complaints. If I were similar to my Jesus, I should act quite otherwise. Amid the most harassing events of my life, I should then say, Shall I not drink the cup which my Father has given me? I should then, even though my God might be punishing me with the sharpest scourges, remember, that it was the kind hand of my parent that chastised me. And this so much the more I should do, since all the sufferings that can befall me are as nothing in calculation with those which Jesus underwent. I need not even once go across the brook Cedron, or ascend Golgotha with him. All the distress that can be measured out to

me is neither hard to bear nor of long duration, nor is it of any account in competition with the glory that shall be made manifest in me. O Jesus! impart to me thy readiness to resign myself to all troubles, and thy courageous spirit to support them to the end. It must, however, come to pass as thy will has determined. So long as I remain here, I must still be proved by many woes. When, in time to come, therefore, on my future pilgrimage any thing displeasing occurs to me, I will say, Be it so: I will submit to this with gladness: the right hand of the Lord can alter all. Finally—I may indulge the hope with firm assurance—finally, like Jesus, I shall be released from all evil, and enter into that kingdom of rest and eternal safety, where God will reward and solace me for all surmounted miseries and difficulties.

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### CONTEMPLATION VIII.

#### *Jesus Deserted by his Disciples.*

And they all forsook him, and fled.—MARK, xiv. 50.

WHAT do I hear?—The disciples abandon Jesus, and flee! These are the men who but a few moments before protested that they were prepared to go with their Master to death. How?—Are they so suddenly become unmindful of their sacred promise? How quickly do boldness and timidity, strength and weakness, love and indifference, succeed each other in their hearts! One would have thought that these, the sole

friends whom Jesus had in the world, would from duty and gratitude have taken the most tender and unshaken interest in his troubles; and though it had even cost them many a tear and groan, stood eye-witnesses of his steadfast nobleness of mind under his afflictions. This was all, indeed, that their Master demanded from them. They were not themselves required to suffer, but only to behold their teacher's—their Redeemer's torments. They were not desired to die with him, but only to obtain atonement and invigoration from his death, and thus to render themselves adequate to become preachers of his cross. I, at least, if I had been so intimately connected with Jesus as they were—what would I not have done for my divine preceptor? I would have wiped away from him every tear that he shed, and treasured up each of his sighs in my heart. No, never would I have forsaken him, I would have followed him from Gethsemane to the council-chamber, and from this tribunal to Calvary: nay, I would have striven for the honour of carrying his cross in the place of Simon. And perhaps—perhaps I would have laid down my life with him.

Thus I think, while at so great a distance of time and scene, I comment upon this memorable catastrophe. But should I have been firmer and more courageous than the disciples of Jesus were, if I had actually beheld the sufferings of my Saviour? Should I have been less fearful than they, knowing that all circumstances conspired to involve his followers in the destruction of their master? When I am in health, and therefore yet far remote, as I imagine, from the grave, I often represent death to myself as easy. But shall I also be of this opinion when it is actually present, or through some painful illness an-

nounces to me its immediate arrival? And equally easy as I now conceive the line of conduct in question to be, did the disciples themselves untried consider it. When a few days previously they gave Jesus the assurance that they would adhere to him even to the grave, they little thought how bitter martyrdom would prove, and how feeble they were to support its pangs. Their presumptuous confidence in their own strength infatuated their hearts so much, that they could not perceive their impotency, their fearfulness, their vain security. And this is the very situation in which I myself am placed. At present I am bold enough to promise all, but how little should I perform if I were really summoned to action? Alas! but far too many also of my fellow-creatures have the like good sentiments as those which I persuade myself that I possess. They venture in their confidence in their constancy and innocence, into the world with headlong temerity; nor think how easily the charm of seduction may overcome their hearts. And often too late, when already drawn into every vice, they discover how powerless, how corrupt, how light-minded they have ever been.

. Ah! my Saviour! now at least I will confess the sad truth; my heart is boastful and pusillanimous. Even I too can on small instigation desert thee, and soon forget the fealty sworn to thee. What then will ensue, if thou call me to a participation of thy sufferings? Shall I, indeed, be sufficiently willing and able to follow and imitate thee, even under the weight of the cross? What will ensue, if in the gay jovial assembly, thy enemies seated around me scoff at thy name? Shall I then have courage enough openly to profess thee, and to remain true to thee unalterably?

What will ensue, if on the one side riches, posts of honour, and sensual gratifications tempt me ; and on the other, poverty, disgrace, and tortures threaten me ; the first being my reward if I desert thee, my Saviour ! the last my portion, if I keep steadfast to my Christian vocation ? How shall I behave under these circumstances ? Shall I think as nobly as Moses, and esteem the shame and the reproach of Jesus as greater wealth than all the gold and silver in the world ? What will ensue when grievous pains afflict me, and heavy calamities, mental and bodily, oppress my spirit ? Shall I not then mistrust the help of God, or seek for comfort elsewhere ?

How many causes truly have I to be afraid of my heart. It can occur in innumerable ways, that I may yet act as faithlessly towards Jesus as his disciples formerly did. And should I be so unfortunate, as to waver in my love towards my Redeemer, I stand in the utmost danger of sinking into perdition ; my heart will torture me with the most piercing reproaches. Let me once lose sight of Jesus, and then if I do not betray him with bold impiety, I shall deny him through cowardice, or at least forget him. Where shall I find health for my soul, ease for the stings of my conscience, joyfulness in prayer, and acquittal in judgment, if I obtain them not through Jesus ?

Faithful Redeemer ! defend me through thy grace from this enormous indescribable misery. Keep me in thy love, and let me not, whether in prosperity or adversity, perversely forfeit it. Should my corrupted changeable heart lead me astray from thee, oh ! preserve me then, Jesus ! and hold me fast by the right hand. Render me firm in faith, and ardent in affection towards thee, and patient to endure all troubles.

Neither happiness nor unhappiness, neither pride nor timidity, neither the fear of man nor complaisance for man, neither life nor death must ever separate me from thy fellowship. Should my heart grow in any degree weary under the struggle, and my flesh despond, oh ! then strengthen me, then encourage me, through the hope of that crown which thou hast promised to thy true followers. Lord ! I vow to thee never more to forsake thee. By that dear covenant which I made with thee in my baptism, by thy steady inexpressible love manifested towards me, by thy countless afflictions, by thy death and cross, I swear it to thee—I will with a sincere heart continue faithful to thee to the end.

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## CONTEMPLATION IX.

### *The Counsel of God in respect to the Death of Jesus.*

Then the band, and the captain, and the officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him : and led him away to Annas first ; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he which gave counsel that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.—JOHN, xviii. 12, 13, 14.

AMONG those who at the condemnation of Jesus acted from corrupted motives of policy, Caiaphas was one of the most conspicuous. He did not in his quality of judge look to that which was consonant to equity and law, but as a wily statesman regarded only what was convenient and profitable. He assumed as a prin-



ciple, that it was better that an innocent man should be murdered, than that for the life of one guiltless individual a whole nation should perish. According to this maxim he argued, that it would be advantageous for the state to have Jesus put to death. However impious and unjust such an idea was, God chose to avail himself of the circumstance thus intimated to carry into execution the counsel which he had formed in respect to Christ from eternity. And to the contemplation of this wise and holy counsel, I will now, for my conviction and tranquillisation, devote the present occasion of undisturbed leisure to silent devotion.

Throughout the whole course of Jesus' troubles no blind chance or unpremeditated accident prevailed. It occurred not through any undetermined event, that he was exposed to this or that ignominy, or endured this or that affliction. Every thing happened as it had been resolved in the counsel of God, and all incidents operated in unison together to manifest in the person of the suffering Redeemer the Mediator betwixt God and man. As early as the time of his apprehension he explicitly gave his disciples to understand this verity, as they were on the point of defending him by force. "But how then," said he, "shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" The same conclusion is valid in reference to his death. It was, therefore, inevitably necessary that it came to pass that the Messiah should suffer death under the existing circumstances, and under no other. And as insignificant as it is to mankind generally at what time, or through what causes a common mortal dies, so oppositely important are all these particulars in relation to the death of Jesus, this being a death of perfect innocence, a death of universal atonement.

According to the counsel and decree of God, the period at which our Redeemer should die was fixed. He might not leave the earth sooner than he really did, for it was indispensably essential that he should previously prove himself to be indeed the Messiah, and perform all the works assigned to him. Already at the time that Herod laid his snares for him, he could have been swept off in his first infancy. But if this had been the case, he would not have been able to bless the world by his example and his miracles, or to accomplish the predictions of the prophets in their full extent; nor would his final departure have ensued in its complete measure of bitterness, or under such circumstances as were imperatively required for his mediatorial death. In this likewise the wisdom of God was made manifest, that the death of Jesus must pre-emptorily coincide with the celebration of the Easter festival. The account of his sufferings could at no season be more quickly and more generally spread abroad than at this very juncture, when many thousands of Jews were assembled together at Jerusalem. And was it not every way consonant with the divine wisdom, that he who had been typified by every paschal lamb, should also consummate his own self-offering at the time that this creature-victim was sacrificed to God?

The place of the death of Jesus was no less determined according to the counsel and admirable designs of the Almighty. Not in so small and unrenowned a spot as his native town was the Messiah to endure his violent and mournful end. No, the place where during his residence on the earth he had so often preached and instructed; the place where he had done so many

wonders ; the place which constituted the rendezvous, the centre point of so many offerings and ceremonials ; the place which stood in such close connexion with so many countries of the globe—this was the spot where the most momentous sufferings of our Saviour were appointed to have their scene. But why was he destined to finish his life at the outside of the city, on the hill of Golgotha? Paul gives us the solution of this question, when in his Epistle to the Hebrews, in the eleventh and twelfth verses of the thirteenth chapter, he thus writes : “ For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.”

The manner of the death of Jesus was likewise ordered according to the counsel of God. It was the terrible death of the cross which our Saviour was to endure. It could be only by this species of death, that God in the punishment of his Son exhibited the highest degree of agony, and in his immolation, the utmost love united with it. By the execution of the cross, the noblest pattern of virtue, and the strongest incitement to righteousness, were offered. “ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up ; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

Farther, according to the wisdom and counsel of God, were the instruments of the death of Jesus determined. Jesus was to be brought to his death by the two nations, who then by distinction formed the inhabitants of the world. An event intended to serve

as a proof, that both the Jews and the Gentiles being under the curse, the Messiah was to obtain absolution and bliss alike for each.

The consequences of the death of Jesus were also prescribed according to the fixed purpose and counsel of God. He should, as Isaiah was assured (liii. 11, 12), see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; by his knowledge he, the righteous servant, was to justify many, bearing their iniquities; a portion was to be divided to him with the great, and the spoil with the strong. He was likewise to have a numerous seed to serve him, and his great deeds were to be related by future generations to their children's children. The accomplishment of these prophecies has been most amply effected in the divine person of our most dear Redeemer, and whoever marks and duly considers this fact cannot fail to be thereby impelled to adore the perfect intelligence of God, and to extol the omniscient decrees of his inscrutable love.

Yes, thou all-wise and beneficent God! I revere in deepest humility thy blessedly advised ordinances, in regard to the last sufferings of our holy Mediator. Truly thy counsel is wonderful, and gloriously dost thou bring all to pass. Now I can firmly assure myself of my atonement, through the death of Christ. God cannot possibly have made such extraordinary preparations, except to some end; nor can Jesus have died in a manner beyond all human imagination so remarkable; nor can the fulfilment of the predictions, even in the slightest points, respecting the mournful close of the life of Christ, have occurred, unless for some especial purpose. No, I am convinced, and I will die in this faith, that I am acquitted, and obtain salvation, through the death of my Redeemer. But so much the

more important and precious his death ought thence always to be to me. How unpardonably should I sin against the goodness and the wisdom of my God, and still more against Jesus himself, if by my impenitence I were to frustrate the whole design of the death endured by him for me !

But my own death also shall be dear to me. Even the same wisdom, through which all the incidents of the death of Jesus were concerted, will likewise so rule my destiny on my leaving the world, as shall be most useful for me. He has ordained the day of the separation of my flesh and spirit, and selected such temporal circumstances for the working of that result, as shall surely alleviate my parting struggle.—Perhaps I may die in the bloom of my years, perhaps in an advanced old age. This uncertainty shall not disturb me. The period at which thou, O God ! hast chosen that I shall breathe my expiring sigh, is for me the fittest. The place too where I shall die has been ordained by thee. But whether I die under the open sky or in my own dwelling, in my native country or in a foreign land, is to me indifferent ; I can die in that place, wherever it be, which is fixed for my dissolution, tranquilly and blessedly, if I die as a Christian. One thing still, however, renders me, perhaps, fearful and grieved ; that I know neither the nature of the fatal sickness, nor the kind of death to which I am doomed. But why should I trouble myself about this ? The Lord of my life has regulated all according to his wisdom and goodness. It will be according to his counsel whether I die slowly or suddenly, gently or in agony. And even respecting the effects that shall arise from my death, my God has already taken measures of extreme foresight. He has already meted out

a small space for my inanimate body, where it shall ultimately rest ; he has already laid up comfort for my friends whom I shall leave behind. How composedly, how much at ease, may I thus bid farewell to the earth ! To thee, my Redeemer ! I owe the whole possible happiness of my coming death. Be thou then gracious to me in that finishing scene of my existence. For the sake of thy own guiltless, atoning death, have mercy upon me, O Jesus !

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## CONTEMPLATION X.

### *The Open and Ingenuous Defence of Jesus before Caiaphas.*

And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world ; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort ; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me ? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them ; behold, they know what I said.—MAT. xxvi. 57 ; JOHN, xviii. 19, 20, 21.

I DISCOVER in this part of the conduct of Christ the advantages which a good conscience and innocence of heart afford, especially in the time of oppression and affliction. The first thought which arises within me at the view of the accused Redeemer must beyond doubt be this ; how worthy of honour and reverence is suffering innocence ! Jesus stood here before the assembly of the chief priests, the scribes, and elders of the

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people, who according to external show formed a venerable council ; but according to their real sentiments, a band of hypocrites, traitors, and foes to mankind. He knew well what he had to dread from the dissembling wickedness of these men, when the individual who presided at their head was Caiaphas, the original instigator of this bloody-minded commission, and who had already long sworn the death of Jesus in his heart. This man assumed the manner of a judge solicitous of equity. In order to shun all appearance of a vindictive intention, he interrogated our Saviour concerning the large sect which he had founded, and the doctrine by which he had procured so many followers. Jesus, to whom the most hidden purposes of his inquisitor were revealed, saw through the malicious craftiness of his questions ; and with the bold candour which is peculiar to innocence alone, and with the wisdom which dwells only in holy capacities, replied to the proposed inquiries. He was able, in regard to his whole tenor of action, to appeal without scruple at once to the fair opinion of the world, and to the testimony of all who had heard him. Even among those who were now about to decree his destruction, there were some who had been eye-witnesses of his behaviour from beginning to end. He had openly published his doctrines, and said nothing in private which agreed not with his general preaching : for he whose object is to do evil keeps himself gladly in secret ; but he who does good can come before the face of the multitude, and unreluctantly, without fear or shame, make manifest his works.

Let me here pause, and for a moment suppose myself under the necessity of appearing before an earthly tribunal, or what is infinitely more, before the tribunal

of God. Should I in this case ever be able to speak with such unhesitating innocence as the author of our religion, and to remain so unalarmed under every adverse verdict? Alas! how little good have I performed in public, and how much evil in private! How many can testify against me, whom I have offended by my life, injured by my words, and misused through my uncharitableness and want of love!—It might well redound to the great invigoration of my Redeemer, that he could look back upon all the deeds of his terrestrial sojourn with the utmost contentment of soul, and without perceiving a single act which had not promoted the welfare of the human race. Whatever passage of his existence he regarded, he saw that he had invariably acted with integrity towards God and man. Neither in his ministerial office, nor in his general intercourse with society, was he aware of any error or deviation contradictory to his holy calling. Hence also he possessed the power to present himself with such serenity before the countenance of his judges. His divine innocence exalted him immeasurably above the base villany of his enemies.

I behold, I repeat it, most convincingly in my Redeemer, how great the consolation of an untainted conscience always is, and how little reason the man to whom the still voice of his bosom can make no reproaches has to be moved even at the most scandalous and hostile calumnies. But it is only the true Christian that can evince such nobleness of mind, in respect to false surmises and conclusions. To him it is of little importance, when he is brought before the judgment-seat of a fellow-creature, whether he be lauded by this man, or vilified by that. Seeing that notwithstanding all purity of heart and conduct, he must pass



through honour and disgrace, and through good and bad report, to his great destination, he is able to support himself unbowed, in the conviction that he will receive commendation from God, and that the morn of universal retribution will set his blameless character in full light. Here in this transient abode no perfect justice is to be expected. If the most innocent among all the children of men was compelled to place himself before a miserable council of evil-doers, how can I be surprised if my so very imperfect virtues should experience the most perverted interpretation? I will hold myself prepared for this fate, and without turning to the world, go forward in the path I have entered upon :—God is he that judgeth me.

Beyond all things it shall be my highest and most assiduous aim to preserve a conscience unstained, both in respect to God and my brethren. What extreme felicity is mine, if I can say with truth, I can remember with all my thinking nothing that should bring upon me a sentence of condemnation at the day of judgment. I am not conscious to myself that I have ever wantonly contemned my Redeemer, abused his atonement, or slighted his gospel. I am not conscious to myself that I have ever designedly disquieted one of my fellow-mortals, or made any being unhappy. “For my rejoicing is this, the testimony of my conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have had my conversation in the world.”—(2 Cor. i. 12.) Yet notwithstanding this persuasion, however unerring it be, I am not justified before the Lord.—Thy eye, omniscient Deity! which penetrates the depths of my heart, will there discover innumerable weaknesses, and burst the obscurity which veils my unknown sins. I

cannot abide thy trial, unless Jesus undertakes my cause, and makes his righteousness available with thee in my behalf. For the sake of his innocence be gracious to me, O God ! in the time of judgment ; and when my soul accuses me before thee, let me be acquitted through the blood shed by thy only Begotten, even for my iniquities.

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## CONTEMPLATION XI.

### *The Cowardice of Peter.*

And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without.—JOHN, xviii. 15, 16.

WHAT an unexpected change !—Had it been left to me to form a judgment according to the courage which Peter displayed at the time at which Jesus was taken prisoner, and the professions which he all along made to his master, I should have decided that his steadfastness and fidelity would have increased with the increasing danger of Jesus. But how suddenly are the sentiments of this disciple altered ! Now, when every circumstance instigated him to the most determined efforts of courage—now he is become timorous ! He is mindful indeed of his declarations, for he turns back from his flight, and follows Jesus : but it is only at a distance, for he is apprehensive of sharing the same fate as his persecuted master. In all his present actions and speeches, the fear of man visibly shows itself.

He even mingles with the servants and bondmen of the palace, in order the more easily to remain unknown.—It seemed to be heroism which induced him to go after the fettered Jesus to the residence of the high priest, but it was temerity, the more culpable, as it was combined with actual pusillanimity. It was indecent presumption, inasmuch as he ventured headlong, without any call, into a contest for which he was by no means matured. It was pride and vanity, in as far as he externally exhibited the signs of a noble spirit, but at heart struggled with the utmost fear.

How much reason, therefore, have I to watch over my heart, and to subdue anxious foreboding dread, that passion so customary to my nature ! In countless cases does it break forth, and I am thus prevented from eschewing evil and doing good. Is it not from the fear of man, that I so often commit treason against the truth of the gospel ; and in order to escape a few personal injuries, and to avoid certain scoffs and scornful sneers, forego my duty ? Is it not the apprehension of trouble, that averts my heart from confidence in God ? Is it not the fear of death, that renders it so frightful, that I despond even at the thought of it ? Is it not a slavish unworthy fear of God, that agitates me so vehemently on the experience of each of his judgments, and in every peril so completely casts me down ? Is it not a perverse fear of hell which debases my religion, restraining me indeed from the perpetration of great crimes, but never encouraging me to diligence in pious works ? How often already I have attempted to resist this affection, to allay it, to conquer it, or wholly to suppress it ! But how fruitless my efforts have been ! It ever returned with new vigour, when I believed that I had irrecoverably vanquished

it. Wretch that I am, who will free me from this fear?—Thou, thou, my Jesus! canst do it. The purpose of thy coming into the world, and thy sufferings, assure me that I shall find rest for my soul with thee. When my wounded conscience makes me tremble through the fear of the vengeance of God, how tranquillised may I become, if I put faith in the blood of my Redeemer, through which my sins have been blotted out! Then every thing which was previously terrible to me takes a new shape, my toilsome life becomes a way to the perfection of bliss, the dangers that threaten me become means towards the confirmation of my Christian faith, the day of my death is the day of my release and liberation, and the corruption of my body proves a preparative for future glorification. Regarded in this point of view, all circumstances lose that form of frightfulness, by which they were formerly disfigured. Is it my inability, my helplessness, that awake my fear? How strong may I grow, if I allow myself to be nourished and satisfied with the grace of Christ! Finally, is the power of the senses the occasion of my sickening terror? How comforted may the certain hope of the invisible treasures that are laid up for me in heaven, and of which I am assured, through the sufferings of my Jesus, at all times keep me!—Yet, it is also necessary to my safety, that I should be cautiously timid, and prepare myself beforehand for those calamities which may still occur to me. Had Peter considered the accidents that might tend to weaken his fortitude, had he set less trust in his own heart, he would not so easily have been overcome by temptation. Misfortunes are only on this account so dreadful and injurious to us, because they surprise

us unawares. It would be a most excellent and profitable thing for me, if in the midst of my gratifications, in the season of prosperity, and in my days of ease, I were to picture to myself the vicissitudes of fortune that may possibly happen to me, and often employ my thoughts with such reflections as the following: I am now tranquil and free from care, but how soon may the hour arrive, when disquiet and sorrow shall possess my whole soul! I am now full of comfort, and in imagination bold enough to resist every assault of Satan and the world, but how soon may I be put to a trial that shall quite discomfit me, and overwhelm me with despair! To-day I love Jesus and his cross, but may not my connexion with society seduce me to become to-morrow an enemy of the atonement? I have still a feeling sensible heart, but how likely it is, that the longer I serve sin I shall become proportionately more and more callous and austere! I am now in health, but how speedily may an illness seize me that shall bring me to the borders of the grave!—On the whole, our fear cannot be totally vanquished, so long as we are still on the earth. I am always surrounded by foes and by dangers, which might excite alarm even in the best and stoutest heart. Could my faith attain to its perfection, my fear would likewise be dispersed. But as long as so much weakness pervades my belief, so long also will fear obtain increasing dominion over me.

Come then to my aid, O Lord, my Saviour, with thy omnipotent might. Be thou my light, my health, and my life's strength, that no fear may prevail over me, and turn me aside from thee. Defend me from all temptations that may be pernicious to my faith,

and grant that, devoid of servile terror, I may worship thee all the days of my existence in love and holy reverence !

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## CONTEMPLATION XII.

### *The Composure of Jesus under the Calumnies of his Enemies.*

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death ; but found none : yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing ? What is it which these witness against thee ? But Jesus held his peace.—MAT. xxvi. 59, 60, 61, 62, 63.

AGAIN a new train of sufferings, and consequently a new victory for my Saviour ! as often as he enters the scene of conflict, so often do I see him return crowned with the prize and with honour. His blood-thirsty foes had made all imaginable preparation to hurry our blessed Redeemer to destruction by the most subtle machinations. They had concerted reproaches, from which they infallibly expected the most favourable results for their vile cause. A number of false witnesses were to rise up, whose evidence would as they anticipated beyond all argument complete the triumph of their murderous plot.—But where were then the witnesses of the Redeemer's innocence and beneficent universal love ? Where were the many persons who had so variously experienced miraculous de-

liverance from their infirmities through his goodness? Why did they not come forward and confute by a look, by the mere exhibition of their healed bodies, the testimony of his lying persecutors? Here it would have been the time for the whole multitude of the miserable who had received help from Jesus, by their grateful tears, and their disinterested unimpeachable attestations, to have demonstrated in its full splendour the perfect guiltlessness of their divine Benefactor. Why did they not all advance and say, with noble undaunted boldness, this so much misused Jesus deserves not at all any one of the injuries which ye do to him: to me, at my entreaty, he restored my lost health; to me he rendered back alive my inanimate child; me, through the omnipotence of his word, he cleansed from the leprosy; through his wonderful and benignant intervention I obtained my hearing; I the use of my tongue; I that of my legs; to me he has granted the forgiveness of my great transgressions?—Would not these concurring declarations of gratitude and truth have rescued slandered virtue at the moment of its utmost need? Would not this host of the lately crippled, blind, deaf, dumb, and leprous, with the thousands of the otherwise favoured, relieved, and fed, have drowned in their acclamations of acknowledgment the execrating cries of unprovoked malice and reprobate wickedness?—Alas! not a single individual among them all appears to defend his kind, helpful friend.—Jesus, however, needed not their defence. His innocence conquered without human aid; nay, even his enemies were forced to conduce to his victory. Was it not a victory for the faultless victim, that notwithstanding all the assiduous pains which his accusers took, in order that whatever it was possible to

allege most prejudicial might be uttered against him, yet their witnesses concurred in no instance in the same testimony? Was it not a victory, that Jesus continued silent under all the virulence of their fabricated indictments? His innocence required no justification, but was every way self-evident.

Jesus! I rejoice in thy innocence. If I am to be justified in the courts of the Most High, then was it necessary that thou shouldst be found wholly irreproachable both before God and man. Thy meritorious righteousness is my comfort when my heart condemns me, and my conscience testifies against me. Ah! how unhappy should I be, if hereafter standing before thy tribunal, I should there hear all the sighs of those whom I had oppressed, all the curses of those whom I had hurt or wronged, all the tears of those whom I had persecuted crying out for vengeance against me. And then when thy sentence pealed in my ears, how I must quake and despair!—Thanks be to thy unsullied purity, now I can hope for pardon! Thanks also be given to thee in particular, for those especial woes which it pleased thee to endure in mute magnanimity!

Yes, with what admiration do I stand and wonder at thy placid composure! Nothing can shake the tranquil collectedness of thy mind, in which it was fortified by thy spotless innocence. Even that strain of address and treatment, which suffice of themselves to stir up every heart merely human, to which virtue and truth are dear, cannot move thee. Thou remainest speechless; this is thy whole apology, thy entire revenge.—I will learn from thee, my Saviour! this sublime attribute; I will learn to heed no disgrace which is undeservedly put upon me; I will learn to bridle



my lips, when my speaking might mislead me into the peril of sinning anew ; I will strengthen myself against the fury of my adversaries by silent fortitude. If my own bosom does not censure me, then will I joyfully face all my traducers, and envious or malignant persecutors.—I will, therefore, through the assistance of the divine grace, so direct my course, that all the false witnesses that bear testimony against me shall go down and sink in their shame. And though my innocence should here be overpowered, and accounted of no avail, a day will yet come when it shall vanquish every odious charge to which I may have been subjected.

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### CONTEMPLATION XIII.

#### *The Ill Treatment of Jesus in the Sacerdotal Court.*

And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy ; and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.—MARK, xiv. 65.

THIS was one of those moments when Jesus was apparently the most despised and worthless of all men, when he endured such indignities, that every one averted his countenance from him, and no mortal regarded him. He was rejected of men, and their face was, as it were, hidden from him. Now it was that the obloquy heaped upon him pierced his heart, and he looked around for a comforter that might sympathise with his distress. But there were none to console him, none to bewail his misery. Scoffed and tortured Jesus ! was there no earthly being to look upon thee

then with pity?—I at least will not be an insensible spectator of thy ignominious sufferings. See, my heart bleeds at the view of thy pangs. Was it not my sins which loaded thee with so much toil and affliction? Was it not my infamy which thou didst bear? Oh! incline my whole soul to this truth, and when I contemplate thee in thy degradation, let me direct my thoughts back upon myself, and strike my breast, and weep over my iniquities.

To what manifold acts of inhuman insolence, O Jesus! wast thou exposed! All circumstances conspired to augment the measure of thy debasement. A barbarous mob of the vilest wretches fiercely presumed to abuse thee in the most unheard-of manner. For what is abuse, if this is not the most outrageous abuse; to spit in the face of an innocent person, to smite him with the fist, to hold him up to laughter and scorn! And this was the conduct of these ruffians towards thee, the most innocent and the most righteous of all the children of men.

They spat in thy face!—Perhaps the curdled blood-drops still stood on it; perhaps in all its features that strong agony which thou feltest at Gethsemane was visible. At least in all the lineaments of thy sacred visage, the most heavenly benignity, the most sincere philanthropy, and the strongest affection even for them that hated thee, together with the deep-marked traces of the heaviest grief, were conspicuous to all. And yet this could not win the compassion of the savage throng!—They struck thee with their hands!—They struck thee—thee, who hadst never injured any living creature, never committed the least offence, nor ever acted otherwise than as the benefactor of mankind! And still their wanton malice had not reached its end.

They mocked thy holy office. They made the cruellest sport of thee, covering thine eyes, and requiring thee to reveal as a prophet, who it was that now took it in turn to exercise his spite against thee!—How if thou hadst opened thy mouth at this insulting challenge to announce to those monsters their perdition, instantaneously following thy words!—But thou supportedst these wanton insults with incomprehensible composure. Thou voluntarily presentedst thy face to the spittle, and thy shoulders to the stripes. Oh! what made thee so ready to undergo all these sufferings? Thy benign love for lost sinners, and the innocence of thy heart, invigorated thee under every renewed torment. Thou lookedst to the bliss which thy surmounted ignominy would bring to mankind. Thou knewest that no affront, however grievous it might be, could obscure thy resplendent purity. Thou knewest the glory which after all thy misery was reserved for thee. For this reason didst thou endure the cross, and regardedst not the disgrace.

But this opprobrium also was destined to thee for wise purposes by the sole Ruler of events; nor did it accidentally occur, that exactly these and no other atrocities constituted, on this occasion, thy portion of wrongs. I conceive that through this species of vexation and detestable violence, thou wast to do penance for the crimes which prevail in regard to religion. Thou permittedst thy prophecies to be turned into frivolous jest; now, I am not surprised that so many scorers, with bold mien and audacious tongue, defame thy gospel with impunity. Thou hast through these, thy sufferings of ignominy and base insult, averted from them that condign chastisement, which in the midst of their abuse of thy word might rightly over-

take them. If they are not suddenly snatched away in thy ire, if they still obtain a respite to address themselves in contrition to thy mercy, this is one of the consequences of thy atoning pangs, which under the scurrilous derision of thy implacable assailants, thou wast doomed, with thy own free consent, to tolerate.

And you, ye flinty-hearted, ye tyrants, ye blood-thirsters, scattered abroad but too plentifully in the world, come hither and gaze upon your tormented Redeemer. All the cruelties which ye practise against the lowly and weak ; the blows with which, even to an excess of brutality, ye mutilate innocence ; the anger into which ye burst, even to the utmost rage, on the commission of the slightest faults, on the part of those beneath you—all these the sole guiltless one was obliged to feel in himself. As often as ye treat your fellow-creatures, and especially those who merit not your rancour, with inhumanity ; at every tear which ye extort from them ; at every wound which ye inflict upon them ; at every mockery, by which ye fret their spirit, remember your Jesus, remember that in the persons of your injured, unoffending brethren, ye ill use your Redeemer. And is it possible, that with this recollection in your minds, ye could dare to continue void of feeling compassion ?

Let me at least, O my Saviour ! never forget the ignominy sustained by thee. Let the memory of it restrain me from all iniquity, and inspire me with courage to bear with patience my own appointed share of obloquy. Let it not astonish me, if for professing thy doctrine I am sometimes attacked by the railleries of the profane ; nor if, as one of thy followers, I must often experience contempt from the wise and great of the world, and find commiseration alone from the

reputed simple and the mean. Yet, let me appear as I may in the eyes of the many, whether as a fool or a man unacquainted with society and the modes of life; I will remain wholly indifferent to all opinion, and allow myself to be alienated from thee, my Saviour and Preserver! neither by cunning nor by force. In the end it will be seen whether the scorner or the scorned, the adherent or the enemy of the cross of Christ, be the more happy.

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#### CONTEMPLATION XIV.

##### *The Fall of the Apostle Peter.*

And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch, and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man of whom ye speak.—MARK, xiv. 66—71.

WHAT a victory was this for Satan! While that apostate spirit was bending all his efforts to vanquish Jesus, he succeeded in conquering one of the most zealous adherents of the Redeemer, the pillar of the future congregation of God, and the most courageous of the disciples. What he in vain attempted with Christ himself, he accomplished in his follower; what

he could not effect against the gospel, he sought to execute against its most renowned professor, and afterwards its most extensive teacher.—And, alas ! the arch seducer of us all triumphed but too completely in the attack, which he directed against the constancy of Peter. But perhaps the prince of hell had armed himself in all his might to lay low this great apostle ; perhaps the trials to which Peter was subjected were so overwhelming, that he could not but yield to them ; he was perhaps so suddenly assaulted, that he had not leisure to place himself in a proper position of defence ; perhaps he even beheld the cross already erected, to which he was to be nailed ; perhaps there were other and immediate tortures in view, the sight of which rendered him of necessity dispirited ; or perhaps he was summoned to make confession before the assembled council, breathing out anger against him, and formidable threats.—All these circumstances combined could not indeed lessen his crime, yet he would at least seem to deserve more pity, if he had become faithless in any situation of such eminent danger ; but no apology of this nature presents itself for the fallen follower of Christ. This disciple, who lately possessed so much courage and resolution as to oppose himself to a whole band, is now too weak to support the attack of a few menial servants. Of these insignificant individuals, who had no right to question him, or call him to account, he was as much afraid as if he had been compelled by some convincing proof, to dread that they would instantly seize him, and bear him off to death. Had his abnegation only once taken place, he might have laid claim to some indulgence ; but, on the contrary, the time which intervened between the several conversations that induced his overthrow,

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it was in his power to have dedicated to reflection, and the recovery of his presence of mind. Instead of this, however, he exposed himself wilfully to each new test; and having at first denied his master with a lie, he added at last an oath and a curse to his falsehood.

Nevertheless, I regard the downfall of this earliest champion of christianity with sympathising love, and with full consciousness of my own weakness. Into what a depth of corruption did Peter thus sink, although so highly elevated above other men by his enlightened understanding, by the nobleness of his heart, and his great integrity! That Judas was guilty of so abominable a deed was not to be wondered at. He possessed a wicked, hypocritical disposition; he had never loved the Lord with his whole soul, and never undertaken an action that did honour to his heart. But that Peter, who was devoted to his Redeemer with such warm attachment, who held so firm a conviction of the divinity of Jesus, and who had besides, on all former occasions, so unequivocally manifested his bravery and frankness of temper,—that this Peter should have fallen so low, and so suddenly, is indeed astonishing. Where are now the noble, disinterested sentiments of this lately intrepid believer? Where is that generous impulse which afterwards occupied his entire mind, and excited him to dare all perils, that he might bring fresh adherents to his master, and everywhere evince himself a witness of the truth in Jesus? Ought the place where he abjured Christ to have been that very spot where it was so imperatively needful for him to make the most unambiguous protestation of his sacred master's innocence? Here he should have pressed into the crowd of the raging foes of Jesus, with the design to convince them of the sinful enor-

imity of their conduct, to punish their thirst of blood, or at least to rouse their compassion for their innocent prisoner. But in the critical situation in which he stood, Peter exercised no such duty of friendship. He neither thought of the ruthlessness of the enemy, nor of the innocence of the Redeemer ; nor of the obligation incumbent upon him openly to confess the Son of God, nor of the example of fidelity which, amidst such events, he was bound to show. He thought only of himself, and the saving of his own life was dearer to him than the avowal of the name of Christ. The death of martyrdom which he might have to dread, if he owned himself to be a disciple of the Messiah, seemed so frightful to him, that he deemed it advisable to shun the immediate hazard of such a fate at any price. Yet, if ever there was one time rather than another, when Peter might have been guilty of defection from his eternal Benefactor and Sanctifier, surely it was not that moment at which he actually denied him. Even then, while Jesus was constrained to endure the most barbarous cruelties from his vengeful enemies, while he was undauntedly making the most candid confession of his manner of life and office to his audacious interrogators, while he was in the act of being condemned to death by his most unrighteous judge, while he was groaning under the most hateful and injurious treatment from the vilest of slaves—even then it was that he had to feel a new and more poignant pang in the disloyalty of his most confidential disciple, who denied him with obstinate imprecations, and would not even so much as know him. Ah ! Jesus ! how great must then have been the sorrow of thy soul ! It was no small mortification and affliction for thee to bear such injustice, such vilifying ignominy,



such extreme ferocity, such numerous and painful blows. But infinitely more must the transgression of thy beloved servant and scholar have broken and depressed thy spirit, since instead of striving to support thee under thy tortures, he wounded thee in a fresh and far more sensible manner. This, however, also belonged to the full measure of the sufferings which were destined to thee by thy Father. Thou wast to make satisfaction, as well for the failings of thy friends, as for the iniquity of thy enemies; the weak as well as the strong, the perjurer as well as the scorner, the fickle-minded as well as the infidel, were to find expiation through thy miseries. What a consolatory fact is this for me, who have an equally faithless and pusillanimous heart, which may soon urge me into similar wickedness! The history of the disavowal of Peter is the history of my own bosom. Let his fall, therefore, be a warning example for me, that I may never trust to my own strength, or prove a recreant to my Redeemer, from any dread for my fellow-dust.

Alas! how much reason, however, have I to be alarmed at the danger in which I find myself! I live in a world where temptations and allurements, capable of rendering the most steadfast minds inconstant, surround me on every side. How can I ever venture to rely upon my own knowledge, prudence, uprightness, or good intention? A trivial accident which I cannot foresee, or some occurrence which my heart represents to itself as perfectly unimportant, may at once make my best resolutions fruitless. A little flattery, a gay jest, the fear of displeasing those to whose good will some value chanced to be attached, a glance into the future offering a prospect, perhaps delusive, of happiness or honour; that yielding complaisance which leads

us to form our opinions after those of the persons who surround us; and a thousand other circumstances, which appear in themselves but trifles, have often already impelled the most ardent partisans of the gospel to waver in their attachment, and have caused the most sincere lovers of godliness to swerve from the right road. And, ah! if the antagonist prosper in this first siege of my soul, I am straightway in danger of being wholly subdued. The first step in the route of vice makes succeeding ones unavoidable; at all events it becomes more and more difficult to return, when we have once rashly proceeded forward, even if only for a few paces. To attain to any real growth in piety, the cultivation of many years is required; but notwithstanding all our rectitude of heart, to relapse into sins and great misdeeds, days and hours are sufficient.

How little can I, poor, helpless mortal, effect when I am abandoned to myself! How speedily am I overpowered, how easily am I brought to the ground, when confiding in my own vigour I enter into contest with my passions! Would it be necessary to lead me to the executioner's pile, to the awful tribunal of justice, or to torture and the rack, in order to extort from me the terrible confession that I know not Jesus? Alas! only a slight incident that flatters my passions is sufficient to bring me to belie my faith.—How many invitations to this sin does the unbelief of these our days likewise present to me! When I renew my wonted intercourse with the world, I shall often hear witless scoffs at religion. In various companies, especially of the higher orders, I shall be obliged to endure dull profaneness, which affects to pass for smart facetious humour. I shall be constrained to endure many a scorner crying with looks of proud defiance, This fellow

also is one of those who believe in Jesus of Nazareth. I shall be often deemed a man without breeding, a hypochondriac, a misanthrope, when I hesitate to take a part in the extravagances of the irreligious multitude. And in these situations particularly I have reason to be concerned for my heart, more easily to be vanquished by such phantoms, than even by the menaces and attacks of actual power, and vigorous persecution.

Oh, then, Lord Jesus ! have mercy upon me. Grasp me with thy potent hand, when I am in peril of being plunged into the abyss of endless woe. Let not the tempter succeed in withdrawing me from thy communion.—Under all misfortunes to acknowledge thee, in prosperity never to forget thee, even to death to remain true to thee,—be this on earth my highest ambition, my dearest solicitude, and hereafter my boast and reward on the day of thy second coming !

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## CONTEMPLATION XV.

*The Kindness of Jesus towards his fallen Disciple,  
Peter.*

And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.—LUKE, xxii. 61.

HOWEVER much the demoniac enemy might have triumphed, when he had vanquished the fidelity of the disciple of Jesus in so degrading a manner, yet he could not long enjoy his booty. Scarcely did Christ behold his beloved overpowered by temptation, ere he hastened to the fallen boaster to help him up, and

to snatch him from the tottering brink of destruction on which he lay. Rapid as his fall was, even so rapidly was he again raised erect. Terrible as the victory was which Satan had obtained over his feeble heart, even so glorious was the grace which restored to him his strength and courage. So false and void of love as he proved himself to be towards his master, even so true and affectionate did the Redeemer show himself to him. And who can thoroughly imagine the tenderness of Christ? Who can feel the full force of the expression, "Jesus looked upon Peter?"—Jesus looked upon Peter! This man of sorrows, who had to struggle with such manifold distress, that it would have been no wonder if he had thought merely of himself, of his own pangs, and of his own danger, forgot the agony under which he smarted, to regard with compassion the ungrateful offender who had forgotten him. His countenance, which was defiled with blows and spittle; his eyes, that were sadly dimmed with much trouble, and streams of tears of anguish—he averted from every other object, and riveted upon that which must have been the most painful to him. There, it is probable, stood Jesus bound to the pillar, and suffering in motionless resignation all the variety of ignominy which was put upon him. No species of ill treatment, how barbarous soever, disturbed the equal tenor of his mind. But when he heard that his disciple, with many an imprecation, denied his name, then the Lord turned round, and looked upon the wretched being, who thus afflicted him with far more acute laceration than that which he was compelled to endure from the scourges of the cruel ministers of persecution. He looked upon him, upon the unfaithful, timorous friend, by whom he had not only been for-

gotten and dishonoured, but what must have been to Jesus far more grievous, denied with curses. He looked upon him, but not with looks full of menace, such as a stern judge casts upon the trembling malefactor; not with looks full of rage, such as those which the deeply injured dart at the convicted offender; not with looks full of pride, such as those with which the exalted of the world scowl down upon the inferior who has chanced to transgress against them; not with looks full of vengeance, such as those that distort the features of the vindictive, seeking to use the pretext of some slight offence to destroy a hated adversary—a language so inhuman the sacred looks of the great guardian of mankind were unable to convey. Could Jesus have spoken—but, perhaps, he had been so cruelly used, perhaps he was so much enfeebled, perhaps he was so goaded with pain, that he wanted the power of giving words to complaint—could Jesus, I repeat it, have spoken, with what heart-breaking tenderness would he not have addressed his disciple, admonished him of the committed crime, and unfolded to him the woes of his own anguished breast! Yet for Peter the speech of the eyes was of still greater force. Jesus needed only once to look upon his erring follower to say to him all—more infinitely than the most fluent eloquence could have divulged. What did Peter see as his look encountered that of his Redeemer?—A blood-smeared, pale, disfigured face, eyes out of which tears gushed in torrents. And what did this ghastly gaze, and these floods of sorrow, utter to him? “Oh! Peter!”—such was their import—“thus savagely have I been already misused and wronged; and thou! thou also wilt increase my agony! Behold how my enemies have harassed me, and thou wilt disquiet me still more! I

bear disgrace and stripes, and thou likewise wilt increase both ! How low, O Peter ! how low thou art sunk !”

Jesus looked upon Peter !—Thus haply a true-hearted father looks upon his son, lately his hope and his comfort, but now, through the influence of seduction, a lost prodigal in the train of the abandoned. Feeling that his last hour is arrived, the upright parent causes his deplored child to be led to his death-bed. His dying pangs allow him not to speak, but he looks upon the deluded youth ; and this awful glance of his half-stiffened eyes reveals his paternal solicitude for the welfare of his unfortunate offspring, and the yearning of his heart towards him. But this image is far too poor to portray the tenderness of the look which Jesus cast upon Peter. He looked upon him with irresistible, celestial goodness ; and all-defaced though his countenance was, yet gentleness, benignity, and universal love beamed in every feature.—And, O sainted apostle ! into what an abyss of inconceivable misery might thy soul have been eternally plunged, if Jesus had not vouchsafed to thee this affectionate look ! How near wast thou, perhaps, to the perdition of posting still farther and farther, still more and more rapidly down the precipice of vice, of becoming always more indifferent towards thy divine master, and of hardening thy heart with perpetually increasing obstinacy against the truth ! Perhaps thou wouldst have gone wilfully forward in thy blind infatuation, or perhaps the stings of thy conscience had driven thee to desperation. What ineffable love !—Jesus looked upon thee at this crisis so decisive for thy everlasting doom. And his look was to remind thee of

thy vows and protestations; his look was to fill thy heart with shame and penitence; his look was to awake thee out of thy fatal slumber; his look was to restrain thee from continuing to sin; his look was to support thee in solitude, and to convince thee of the durable esteem of thy holy never-failing guide.—All this Jesus sought to bring about in Peter. And glory be to that grace which operated not in vain for the rescue of this forlorn backslider!

But in me, likewise, O heavenly Sympathiser! thy grace has magnified itself. Is it not thou that hast led me back from the way of destruction to the pleasant paths of virtue? Ah! long ago I had perished in my iniquities, or my heart were become totally callous towards thee, if thou hadst not deigned to me thy watchful care. When I was wandering in the most perilous labyrinths of error, with what faithfulness didst thou follow after me, with what speedy kindness didst thou overtake me, with what might didst thou bear me out of the reach of all harm! When through dissimulation I disowned thee, how nobly didst thou seek me out, that my soul might escape ruin!—My Lord and my God! never, I beseech thee, take away from me thy grace. Look mercifully upon me, whenever in word or thought, or by any of my actions, I madly disacknowledge thee, that I may not die an enemy to thy cross. Look upon me with helpful pity, when temptations are about to subdue me, that I may obtain courage and strength to resist them. Look upon me with indulgence, when through the recollection of my misdeeds I am comfortless and ready to despond, that I may find repose for my wearied spirit. Look upon me, finally, with cheering benignity, when on my

couch of mortal dissolution, I shall lie feeble, impotent, and joyless, that I may find invigoration and solace in my death-struggles. Amen.

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## CONTEMPLATION XVI.

### *Peter's Repentance.*

And Peter went out and wept bitterly.—LUKE, xxii. 62.

SUCH touching virtue had the look of the suffering Jesus.—Here he again showed himself, even in his bonds, to be the Lord that has all power over the minds of men. How impotent and fruitless are often, on the contrary, our fondest and most compassionate regards! How seldom is a father so happy as to be able, through the moving entreaty of the eyes, or by any other means which his affection suggests, to stay his son in the headlong career of profligacy, and induce him to labour back his way up the steps of righteousness! Quite otherwise was it with the look of Jesus, which he vouchsafed to his vanquished friend. This look penetrated the soul of Peter to its inmost recess, and showed him at once, not only the enormity of his transgression, but also the danger into which he had hurled himself. This look roused him out of the lethargy wherein he was buried, and brought him to instant reflection on his misdeed.

Peter could not sustain the look of Jesus.—He lost no time to hurry out of the place which had been so fatal to him. He removed himself from the company



of those flagitious persons who had averted his thoughts from his master. Solitude was now for him, indeed, a melancholy yet a salutary retreat. Here he could meditate uninterrupted upon the immensity of his own crime, and upon the greatness of the grace of Christ. Here with due circumspection he could search into his soul, which had been so misled by its unworthy passions; and measure over every step which he made towards the completion of his downfall.

I should indisputably by this time have advanced farther in godliness, if I had in this point imitated Peter: for so long as those distracting societies, in which I lost my innocence, fetter me; so long as I attend with pleasure these time-destroying games, those lascivious dances, those unchaste discourses, which have hitherto stifled in me the sentiment of the fear of God; so long as I flee not the places which afforded such noxious nourishment to my wicked affections, so long must all the good purposes which I form continue barren.—Be bold, O christian! with the aid of the divine grace to quit these deadly ways. Represent to thyself with what a piteous look Jesus must gaze upon thee, when thou in so many indecent jests, in such vain amusements, so oft and in such a variety of ways deniest him! Couldst thou bear that even a man to whom thou owest respect should be the eye-witness of such indefensible conduct? Bethink thee then that God, thy Jesus, the angels are the invisible spectators of thy vicious excesses. Canst thou in the sight of such hallowed, such revered witnesses practise iniquities which cannot fail to render thee an abomination to them? Flee, flee the lusts which domineer over thy heart. Flee those scenes where God, where Jesus with his grace cannot be present. Strive, through the power

of the spirit of the Lord, to tear asunder all the hazardous connexions in which thou art involved, and to break the chains which hold thee captive under the tyranny of sin. Seek retirement, which has hitherto been so distasteful to thee. The longer thou shalt frequent it, the more advantage it will bring to thee. Thou wilt learn the grand art of being happy without noisy gratifications, and of living contented without seductive companions. There thou wilt know, for the first time, the true nature of thy heart, which under the dissipations of the world remained concealed from thee.

Peter covered his face as he withdrew from the assembly of sinners, out of shame and sadness for his just committed offence. Now he no longer thought so highly of himself, and of his imagined heroism, as he had done a few hours before, when without a blush he could say to Jesus; Lord! I am ready to go both to prison and death. Now he believed that every one who saw him would reproach him with his infidelity and fickleness, that every just and righteous man would view him with abhorrence, and shun his presence.

Ah! how far am I still distant from such sentiments! I, perhaps, can still exercise myself in depravity without remorse. Perhaps no blush ever overspreads my face when I indulge in profane mockeries, loose discourse, slanders, and lies, or when I hear them from the mouths of others. Perhaps I hold it an honour to frame my mind after the ruling taste of the corrupted age in which I exist.—O, no! am I not yet sunk so deeply;—so insensible my heart is not yet become! I am well convinced that I have trespassed against God, and I am not void of shame, when my conscience or my friend discloses to me my failings.

But why are the sins, of which I must be ashamed, still so agreeable to me? Ah! God, thou knowest my foolishness. Bruise my heart, I implore thee, for my good, and humble my proud spirit.

The fallen Peter, who could lately disown his divine master without a thought of weeping, and behold with unmoistened cheeks the ignominious misery of his dearest friend, now suddenly felt such a powerful concussion of the heart, as turned his eyes into fountains of tears. He wept bitterly: this was the first alleviation which his oppressed bosom received, and likewise the first operation of the godly efficacy of the look of Jesus. His heart was not hardened against the accusations of his conscience. He felt in its full extent the magnitude of his guilt, and fell into the most violent uneasiness concerning it. I also must weep, very bitterly too I must weep, when I think upon my errors. God preserve me from the fate that I should remain without emotion, when I reflect upon the anguish of an awakened conscience! He that cannot weep over his sins, is likewise incapable of feeling the joy of receiving pardon. He who on the remembrance of his sins continues insensible, is likewise unable to feel the grace which the forgiveness of his sins affords. O! how do I rejoice that I am not a tearless sinner! I cannot without sorrow think upon my vices, and the sufferings which Jesus, for the sake of them, endured. But this I must, at the same time, confess, that soon, far too soon my tears are dried up; and with them the most sincere repentance, and the best purposes, are extinguished in my soul.

Of a very different nature was the impression which the tears of penitence made upon the heart of Peter. They never dried up entirely. His life was one con-

tinued act of penitence, or rather of reparation of his crime. If his love towards Jesus was apparently so weak at the period of his denial, how strong, how ardent, how inflamed was it when Jesus put the question to him, for the third time, after his resurrection, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"—and Peter replied, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee!" If he before disowned Jesus in the presence of his foes, how boldly did he afterwards acknowledge him, not before a small company, but before many thousands of his adversaries! If he gave scandal to the church through his present act of unfaithfulness, with what zeal did he afterwards seek to atone for this injury, and to edify the worshippers of Christ by his unshaken fidelity! If he before shunned the judgment-seat of his great and powerful enemies, with what joy did he afterwards permit himself to be dragged from one court to another, and from province to province in bonds, and summoned to perilous and partial trial, by both Jews and Romans! Was he too timorous, on this one occasion, to risk the sacrifice of his life for his master and Saviour, with what contentment did he afterwards surrender it in the same cause, and with what ready gladness would he have devoted a thousand lives, if he had had them, as an offering to Jesus!

Would that my penitence, and my remorse, might be followed by the like effect, and take the same course! Would that I, who have hitherto undervalued and denied the Lord, might, for the time to come, love him so much the more dearly—attach myself to him so much the more faithfully!—Yet, what avail my wishes? Jesus! thy almighty efficacy must dispose me to form good resolutions, and strengthen me to execute

them. Thou, benignant Redeemer, who didst not repel thy servant Peter, when he implored grace ! let me also find thy countenance, when I pour out my heart in tears and complaints before thee. Confirm in me the purpose to dedicate myself to thee with all my powers and faculties, mentally and bodily ; and as I have been thus long the property of the world, a servant of sin, and a victim of my lusts, so let me be hereafter thy vowed servant, and remain so to eternity.

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## CONTEMPLATION XVII.

### *The Divinity of the Suffering Jesus.*

And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests, and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe ; and if I also ask you, you will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God.—LUKE, xxii. 66—69.

My faith is confirmed in an extraordinary degree, the more I am convinced that the suffering Jesus is the true and eternal God. Jesus availed himself, therefore, of every opportunity that offered to give his enemies a visible proof of this verity. Hitherto, amidst all the questions that were put to him, and amid all the ill treatment which he received, he remained silent. But when, at last, it came to the demonstration of his mediatorial office, and of his godhead, he spoke with the greatest possible openness, and the most sacred

energy. He explained to his persecutors, that in a short time the manifestation of his omnipotence and majesty would commence; namely, when the Holy Ghost should be visibly poured out, and his judgment of wrath should burst over Jerusalem. And to what an elevation of dignity and worthiness does not this declaration raise up Jesus? In a few weeks afterwards the accomplishment of his words commenced, and when the hour of vengeance broke in upon the sinful city, the most of those persons who had heard his denunciation were still there.

Always, even in his deepest debasement, the proofs of the divinity of Christ are exceedingly numerous. He knew his betrayer beforehand; he determined the time when the apparently so steadfast Peter should deny him; by a single word he struck his assailants to the ground; at the very moment at which he was bound, he performed yet another not less wonderful miracle; he was able by a glance to rouse the DENIER out of his apostasy to the most effectual penitence, and change of heart; finally, he proved on the cross itself, that it was in his power to pardon sinners, how heinous soever their crimes might be: and when he had reached the lowest depth of his humiliation, while he was actually enduring death, how gloriously was he proclaimed as the Son of God!—the orb of day was darkened in the moment of its full splendour; the earth trembled and shook; the graves opened; and all things co-operated to make manifest the infinite majesty of the dying victim.

What comforting prospects present themselves here to my view! I see that his powerful godhead supported his sinking human nature, so that the latter was enabled to sustain the penalty of the atonement.

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I see that the sufferings of my Mediator are of boundless sufficiency. Hence the agonies and the death of Jesus first derive that inestimable value, through which they are exalted without end above all the torments and distresses of all the martyrs. Was my Redeemer only for this reason to endure such diversified woes, and such a shameful execution, that I might possess in him a pattern how I ought to demean myself in my calamities, and in my death? I cannot conceive for what purpose the Son of God should have been selected for this example: and of what utility would the most sublime instance of virtue be to me, if I did not, at the same time, obtain strength to imitate it? No, I am persuaded that the benefit of the sufferings of Jesus is to be estimated at a price that admits not of any comparison with such a calculation. I see in the person of the suffering Christ, not only the martyr, but also the champion and the founder of my religion; and at every step which he makes in the path of trouble, not only a model, but also a free-will offering for sinning man. Briefly I find in the history of the afflictions of Jesus, as well the doctrine of my faith, as the rule of my moral life; in the sufferer himself, my Saviour; and in my Saviour, my God.—The death of Jesus!—what a death was this for me! To be God, and to become man, only to be able, on my account, to suffer beyond all parallel; to be God, and to become the most despised and the lowest of all human beings; to be God, and to exclaim on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”—to be God, and die, to die for rebellious creatures; for the ungrateful works of his own hands, to die for me; what a death is this!—Thus died no Stephen, no James, no Paul.

When I take the gospel of Jesus' sufferings in this its right point of consideration, it is not possible to read it, or to think of it, without feeling all the excitements of astonishment and pity, of faith and love, of thankfulness and of ardent zeal, which it is so eminently suited to produce. With what warmth must I love a Redeemer, who offered up all that he possessed, fulness of majesty, supreme exaltation, perfect joy, to the end that he might liberate me from the misery into which I was fallen through sin! Can my gratitude ever be strong enough, when I reflect upon the prospect of eternal felicity which I owe to my Mediator?

Ah! ungrateful heart! Still thou lovest far too little him that loved thee, even unto the grave. Oh! let the fire of divine love light within thee a glowing unquenchable flame; and be to thy utmost strength, and to thy latest beat, fervent in the faith to devote thyself to him who through his mediatorial death has gained for thee unutterable, unceasing bliss.



## CONTEMPLATION XVIII.

*The Views of God in the Delivering over of Jesus into the Hands of the Heathens.*

Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgement : and it was early ; and they themselves went not into the judgement-hall, lest they should be defiled ; but that they might eat the pass-over. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man ? They answered, and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews, therefore, said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death ; that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake signifying what death he should die.—JOHN, xviii. 28—32.

THE sufferings of Jesus furnish a copious contribution to the history of the most hidden governance of God, or rather it is a concatenation of the most wonderful providential occurrences that ever took place in the world. How little soever the holiness of God permitted that he should, in any way, co-operate with the flagitiousness of men in furtherance of the execution of his only-begotten, still it is undeniable that at every step, in the awful destiny of Christ, we discover the most conclusive traces of the overruling power of God. It was an effect of his providence, that merely through his permission, and through the conjunction of various, seemingly at least quite adventitious, circumstances, he accomplished his predetermined purposes. It was an effect of his providence, that he turned the malicious subtlety, by which the Jews were actuated in their delivery of Jesus to the Heathens, to those im-

portant ends which the completion of the grand work of the atonement required. The enemies of Jesus followed in this instance, as usually, the perverted dictates of their spiteful and cunning hearts; they sought, by their surrender of Christ to the Romans, to transfer the hatred of the people to those foreign masters of the state, and to bring about the infliction of such a punishment upon Jesus, as should render him an abomination in the eyes of the whole Jewish race.

Had Jesus, besides, died under the hands of his own people, the report of his death would not have been so easily spread through the heathen provinces; it would have remained almost wholly confined within the borders of the land of the Hebrews; Rome and Italy would not so readily have received information of the momentous transaction. But Jesus being judicially put to death through the joint instrumentality both of the Jews and the Heathens, his death was rendered so much the more notorious, and made public even among those nations which stood in no direct connexion with Jerusalem. The fame of a crucified performer of well authenticated miracles paved the way for the evangelical annunciation, even before the apostles could go forth among the Gentiles. Many who heard of this event were already prepossessed through it in favour of Jesus, or at least moved through his conduct to pity. And now were the witnesses of Christ, who preached the crucified Jesus, able to appeal to this fact, as to a thing with which both the professors of idolatry, and the progeny of Israel, could not but be equally acquainted, since they had mutually aided each other in his lamentable end.

Had Jesus died under the sole jurisdiction of the Jews, he could not have suffered the death of the

cross, which was a capital punishment in use among the Romans only. But Jesus, in pursuance of the designs of God, was unalterably and absolutely destined to undergo this species of execution, and no other, which was attended with such extreme infamy, and such excessively violent pangs. His death would indeed have been expiatory if he had been beheaded like John the Baptist, or stoned like Stephen; but how could then the types have been accomplished, which Jesus himself applied to the manner of his last struggle, according to the record of John, in the fourteenth verse of the third chapter of his holy gospel? How could the prophecy of David have been fulfilled, who so many centuries previously foretold, that the Heathens would rage against the Messiah, and the people imagine a vain thing; that the kings of the earth would set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed; that the assembly of the wicked having compassed and enclosed Christ, would pierce his hands and his feet; and would part his garments among them, and cast lots for his vesture: for such is the import of the two first verses of the second, and of the sixteenth and eighteenth verses of the twenty-second Psalm? Even for this cause alone it was imperative that Jesus should experience the excruciating tortures of the cross, and, therefore, die under the domination of the Heathens. But, on more mature consideration, I find yet other grounds, which may lead me to the object of God in this decisive stage of the sufferings of the Saviour. The death of the Redeemer was to expose him to the universal gaze, as a spectacle of ignominy and scorn. It was to be a death, through which he should shed his entire blood, through which he should become, as

it were, a curse for us, while his body should still remain unmutilated ; and he himself, through all his expressions, and through his whole conduct, be able to impart to us, till his latest groan, the most momentous lessons, and the strongest motives of comfort. Every one of these results was most easily to be secured through the death of the cross.

In deepest humility do I adore, O Omniscient ! thy counsel. Each incident in the sufferings of my Jesus convinces me with firmest certainty, that thy wisdom has triumphed over all the deliberations of the impious, and perfected in the most victorious manner the sublime achievement, through which the sins of the world were to be atoned. How dear must our souls be in thy sight, since, in order to save them, thou hast wrought for us such mighty services, and established so glorious a memorial of thy own infinite intelligence and goodness ! But how vilely does the world, alas ! recompense thy wisdom and benevolence. It frets at thy decrees, and deems the cross of Jesus foolishness. But let it act thus unthankfully ! To me at least thy ordinance is, and shall remain, the most adorable wisdom ; to me the cross of my Redeemer is the most worthy theme of my acknowledgment, my boast, and my faith. Let the world form its conspiracies against thee, and against thy beloved ; it will still be obliged unknowingly, and even contrary to its intentions, to become subservient to thy purposes. How tranquillising is this reflection, even in regard to the changes and events of my own life. Nothing can happen to me here, save what the Omniscient has foreseen from eternity. If I am united through faith and godliness to my Redeemer, then must every thing, even the most remorseless plot which men can devise against me,

conduce to my best interest. And should even difficulties seemingly invincible oppose themselves to God's resolves, he will still be powerful enough to carry his determinations through, according to his pleasure. The calumnies, by which my enemies attempt to ruin and overthrow me, will raise me up. The mockery, with which they vex me, will recoil upon themselves. The uneasiness which they occasion to me will promote my ultimate happiness: and should it even be the total destruction of my body, through which they strive to do me evil, their success will aid my entrance into a better state of existence. My heart, however, must, under all its impending destinies, be so inclined as the heart of Jesus was. I must always show myself as constant, as full of trust, as faithful, as composed, as obedient, as my Saviour. I must be as free as he from all reproofs of conscience. Then I may go on unmoved to my appointment; then I may be assured that all the decrees of my God concerning me will finish in grace and glory. For if I abide true to thee, O God and Father! thou wilt hold me by the right hand, thou wilt lead me according to thy counsel, and finally thou wilt receive me into everlasting honour.

## CONTEMPLATION XIX.

*A Demonstration of the Righteousness of the Cause of Jesus, founded upon the Calumnies of his Foes themselves.*

And they began to accuse him saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, That he himself is Christ a King.—LUKE, xxiii. 2.

WHAT accursed infatuation and wickedness the enemies of Christ display here ! Formerly they had brought a few accusations against him, which, with weak and partial minds, might have possessed some appearance of truth ; but now, when they perceived the fruitlessness of their past attempts, they hesitated not, in order to reach their base aims, to load the innocent Jesus with the most infamous slanders. They were even so audacious as to prefer against the Redeemer imputations totally opposite to what the evidence of every day had most clearly shown. What ! had he instigated the people to sedition, and filled them with superstitions ? he who, amid all the applause which he received on account of his miracles and his doctrine, sought to shun nothing with greater care than that the more feeble in knowledge and capacity should be induced, from vain motives, or ignorance of his real mission, to choose him for a worldly chief ; he, who never, in any way, turned to his own utility the goodwill which he had gained on account of his goodness towards his countrymen ! How easily, instead of living in need and penury, might he have procured for himself all the conveniences and even luxuries of life, if he

had chosen to make any sort of traffic or usury of his unparalleled favours ! Among so many diseased whom he had cured, surely there would have been some willing, out of gratitude, to offer up to him a large portion of all the substance which they possessed ! But he never studied his own glory, never his own advantage : he preferred rather to live in the most abject contempt and poverty, than that the slightest shadow of selfishness should attach itself to his deeds of beneficence. Slandrous wretches ! ye cried out, that Jesus had led astray the affections of the common people, and made for himself a party among them. But tell me, first, where did he ever hold out a language that could, in the least, authorize this complaint ? From what one action of his life is this culpable proceeding to be inferred ? More than once he even resisted the actually self-interested purpose of his adherents to elect him for their king. And if it had been a point of any moment with him to raise a body of partisans among the lower classes of the state, it would evidently have been a most easy thing for him to have drawn upon his side the numbers whom his benefits had severally bound to him by the ties of deepest obligation, and, through their aid, to have effected all his plans. For the sake of their own advantage, all the sick, the maimed, the poor, the forlorn, and the distressed, released from their troubles and fresh for the strife, would have taken him under their protection ; and defended his cause, could they only have perceived, by the most distant hint, that they should thus tend to promote his views. And if Jesus had really succeeded in exciting the people against their legal magistracy, how came it that his followers were now so quiet and mute ? How came it, that the people, otherwise so in-

clined to uproar and insurrection, were on this occasion so calm and indifferent, and permitted, without a murmur, their leader to be so cruelly treated?

Yet, however impudently barefaced and wicked this calumny was, another, notwithstanding, accompanied it, surpassing all that can be imagined flagrant. Jesus, proclaimed his adversaries, had prohibited the people from paying tax to the Roman emperor. And could these miscreants, without a blush, bring forward this reproach? But this is the very quality of a hardened blinded heart, that it at last arrives at so great a promptitude and habitualness in mischief, that nothing makes the smallest impression upon it which its own villany suggests. It was peculiar to the obdurate character of such grievous malevolence, as that which actuated the foes of Christ, to be able, without shame, without remorse, and without feeling, to proceed from one vice to another. Only novices in iniquity are sometimes disturbed by such workings of the conscience: adepts in sin can remain tranquil and smiling amid all their atrocities. And to this degree of satanic proficiency must the minds of the conspirators against the Lord have attained, when they uttered the allegation. For if only the weakest sentiment of rectitude had been left to them, it would have been totally impracticable for them, without being stung to the quick by their own souls, to have ventured upon the effrontery of such an audacious lie. But two days before, Jesus had pronounced against the scholars of the Pharisees and the adherents of Herod the very opposite of that which was here falsely laid as a crime to his charge. To the question craftily put to him, Whether it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar or not? he had given a decision, which fully manifested his peaceful and



patriotic disposition. Render unto Cæsar, answered he, the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's. And now they presume to allege the very reverse of what Jesus had said, as one of his principal transgressions !

But with what splendid brightness does the heavenly innocence of my Redeemer here shine forth ! Venomous as the slanders of his enemies were, there was not one of them that touched his course of life. It is not, however, to be expected, from the rancour of his accusers, that they would have passed over in silence even any trivial impropriety through which Jesus had stained the purity of his days. At this moment, when their instigator, the devil, infused every conception into their wily brains through which they might haply attain the fame of Christ, undoubtedly they would not have failed eagerly to catch at every little failure, at every trifling inadvertency, which Jesus had at any time committed, and to avail themselves of such to the utmost for the furthering of their evil enterprise. His unsullied, spotless life, however, compelled them to have recourse to groundless fictions, and to make calumnies incapable of truth the basis of his desired condemnation. But such a high-priest as stood there, holy, guiltless, unstained, and entirely separated from sinners, it was imperative for me to have, if I was to be acquitted of my iniquities. The bondsman for my sins could not be defiled with any tinge of offence, if I was to be enabled to sustain the judgment of God. Oh ! how I rejoice in thy unimpeachable innocence, my suffering Redeemer ! I should be driven to despair eternally, if, amid the criminations of my conscience, I knew not this consolation, that thou wast found immaculate before God and man.

## CONTEMPLATION XX.

*The Miserable, Unhallowed End of the Betrayer of Jesus.*

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.—MATTHEW, xxvii. 3, 4, 5.

HERE now stands the wretched deluded Judas, on the edge of the precipice, to which, in the riot of his lusts, without having himself observed his progress, he had advanced. Here he stands, ringing his hands, and surveying, in all the terrors of aroused conscience, the frightful depth beneath: he draws hastily back a few paces, returns anew, and, full of desperation, hurls himself into the abyss. Full of desperation! Ah! who can comprehend this terrible word; who can describe all the horrors comprised in it, that has not personally felt the torments of that hopeless state? And who could feel these torments without perishing, like this infatuated sinner, under their poignancy?

Such is the dreadful extremity to which sin pushes us. This is the primary lesson which this despairing wretch gives to me. While Judas was employed with the first idea of his inhuman deed, his darkened heart prevented him from perceiving the baneful consequences of his transgression. He considered nothing beyond

the vile enjoyment which the possession of a few crowns promised to him. He reflected not upon the anguish of conscience which, after the perpetration of his wickedness, might seize upon his heart; and even as little was he aware of the magnitude of his crime; since, for the recompense of an unworthy, paltry gain, he was induced to become a traitor to his Master, and the murderer of his Benefactor; and to eradicate all fidelity and integrity out of his soul. Thus the drunken man thinks not of the danger to which he is exposed at every step; he trembles not at the fathomless pit towards which he is reeling; he heeds not the warnings which are addressed to him for his safety. But what vexation must fall upon him, when, restored to understanding, he marks the immensity of the peril into which he has hurried himself; when he sees the disgrace which has covered him, and reflects upon the misery in which he is left helpless! In this situation—if even the excessive may be compared with the infinite—did Judas feel himself, as he awoke out of the insane intoxication of his mad passion. Now it was that his spirit held up to his contemplation the entire abomination of his heinous guilt. Every thought which he turned upon himself filled him with shame, sorrow, and perplexity. Now he knew and acknowledged the abject impulse which had seduced him to treachery; those thirty bits of silver, for which he had sold his best friend and his most faithful teacher and Lord to death! And now, when he beheld Jesus condemned, he began to call to mind that sentence which on the great and solemn day of general judgment, in the sight of all the angels and of all the human race, present, past, and future, it became him to anticipate. It seemed to him, in the confusion of his ideas, as if he already

saw the Jesus, betrayed by him, in his judicial glory ; as if he already heard the voice of thunder ordering him into the eternal fire prepared for the damned ; as if he already found himself with the associates of his villany in that accursed place where tortures of all kinds encompass the condemned beyond redemption. And, in order to pluck out of his imagination these insufferable presentiments, and to shorten the period of his immediate pangs, what does this distracted creature do?—he perpetrates an act which changes his foreboding fears into reality, and augments the duration of his misery to perpetuity ; he goes out and hangs himself ! So terrible only can be the death of a man whose life was so detestable. Ah ! no ; this acme of wickedness and obduracy is not required to urge a human being to die, like Judas, in incurable despair. Every vice, how insignificant soever it may be estimated, may goad us to the gulf in which Judas met his irremediable destruction. A sin which appeared to us as an almost unobservable grain of sand, so long as our conscience still lay in slumber, may, when once the latter is awaked, press on us like a mountain and bury us under its load. To-day it is, perhaps, but a matter of trivial concern to us if we abuse innocence, or unjustly defraud widows and orphans, or violate our duties towards our parents and those that are set in rightful authority over us : but shall we so judge when death is at hand ? yet, let it be at hand ; let my conscience portray to me my sins in their full extent and variety, I shall not, after all, like Judas, have cause utterly to despond. My sincere penitence will reconcile God and my conscience.

But, sinner ! thou that seekest to raise thyself up from thy downcast state through this consolation, per-

haps thou rememberest not how full of remorse, how bowed down, the heart of the despairing Judas was ; how he seized every means through which he could flatter himself he might receive an alleviation for his afflicted spirit. He was not so undisturbed as many workers of iniquity are after the commission of their crimes ; he felt the most lively abhorrence for himself and his flagitious act. Shame, anguish, hatred of sin, heart-rending reflections, and the deepest grief, prevailed over him by turns. He recognised his criminality, and was not abashed to confess it before those to whom this confession must have been the most repugnant. He hastened to the high priests, and threw the blood-money at their feet. He sought for comfort from them, and thought to find an assuagement for his woes, when, through this step, a part of his burden should have been removed. But all this could not heal his wounded conscience ; could not soften the pain which the remembrance of his wickedness excited within him ; could not snatch him from deadly desperation.—Make but the experiment, O sinner ! make but the experiment, when thy spirit is dismayed and agonized, strive to find ease in bitter repentance alone ; shed floods of tears ; let shame weigh thee down to the dust ; what wilt thou obtain from this ? So little will peace return into thy broken heart, that this heart will far rather sink under its own distress. Seek then relief among the partners of thy iniquities ! Ah ! they who are so cruel towards themselves, cannot have pity for thee. They who know no peace themselves, cannot grant to thee the blessing of that peace which passeth understanding. When thou meltest before them into pungent tears, they also will perhaps answer to thee, See thou to it. And woe is thee, if thou remain aban-

doned to thy own counsel ; woe is thee, if it be left to thy own foresight to rescue thee from perdition !

Only one way rests which can afford thee escape from the misery of desperation. Let thy heart, pierced through and through with contrition, seek for ease in Him who has shed his blood for the sins of all. What if Judas, repentant, and burdened, and heavy-laden with his misdeeds, had drawn near to Jesus—would he, is it probable, have been received by the Saviour with less tenderness than the perjured Peter ? Ah ! Judas ! wherefore didst thou not, instead of betaking thyself to that barbarous crew of ruffians, flee to him whom thou hadst injured through thy evil doings ? In his presence thou shouldst have poured forth those tears which thou lettest fall upon the bosom of thy seducers. Oh ! he would have dried them up with an affectionate hand. Before him thou oughtest to have laid that penitential offering which thy false friends and murderous bribers disdained. To him thou oughtest to have made that confession of thy iniquity which thou utteredst in vain in the assembly of the impious. Oh ! he would have forgiven thee all thy faults, and cheered thy mournful heart through the comfort of his redemption. May, in my own heart at least, this comfort be very vigorous, even when, by reason of the recollection of my transgressions, I know not where to find solace for my soul ! I must not, however, in this case, merely survey the vastness of my sins, but look likewise to the infinity of that mercy which is spacious enough to cover all sins. Does my sense of the holiness and the righteousness of God cast down my sad, ashamed countenance ? Oh ! then, it must be again lifted up, through the consideration of the grace and the perfect rectitude of Jesus. When I think of the direful penalty which

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I have incurred by my offences, then I must not forget the quite sufficient ransom through which I have been purchased from everlasting perdition. Now God be with me to this end, and save me from despair !

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## CONTEMPLATION XXI.

### *The Confession of Jesus to Pilate.*

Then Pilate entered into the judgment-hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews ? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me ? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew ? Thy own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me : what hast thou done ? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews ; but now is my kingdom not from hence Pilate, therefore, said unto him, Art thou a king then ? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth ? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.—JOHN, xviii. 33—38.

IT is indisputably necessary for the confirmation of my faith, and for my inward peace, that I should find in thee, O tortured Saviour ! a king from whom I am justified to expect all that is essential to my happiness, to my security, and to my spiritual and eternal liberation from sin. How easily might thy disciples mistake thee under the great ignominy which thou sufferedst ! For thou hadst no outward comeliness, and when thou wast seen thou hadst no beauty to make thee desired ;

thou wast despised and rejected of men, and as if thou hadst been the lowest of slaves, they that saw thee hid, as it were, their faces from thee. Therefore was it needful that thou shouldst now make a declaration of thy divine highness. And if this confession was useless in respect to Pilate, it is not, however, so for me. For me it is of the utmost importance to know that Jesus is a king, that he is the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world. Now vanish all the apparent contradictions which I hitherto believed that I perceived when I reflected upon his kingly exaltation—It was inconceivable to me how Jesus could be a king, and yet so generally spurned, so scandalously misused, and so deeply degraded. It was inconceivable to me how Jesus the king could have so few subjects, and so few of the great and the rich among his followers. It was inconceivable to me how all power in heaven and on earth was given to Christ, while, nevertheless, the princes of the world shared the wealth and the lands of the globe among themselves! To be a king, and yet to be so scorned; this seemed an inconsistency to my understanding. But now this darkness clears off; he is a king, but his kingdom is not of this world; his kingdom is a kingdom of truth.

Well is it for me that the kingdom of Jesus is not an earthly kingdom. Now, I know how to console myself, if in the world I find not joy, happiness, and honour; but, on the contrary, misery, contempt, and poverty. I shall now be neither perplexed nor disappointed, when my wishes and hopes are not fulfilled.—The kingdom of Jesus is not of this world. It has nothing in common with the governments of the earth. I need not expend vast sums, I need not offer up my blood, or my fortune, in order to purchase a post in it.



I need not waste my own strength, or my own funds, to make my King great and opulent. I need not dread the loss of the treasures which have been made over to me by my Prince.—The kingdom of Jesus is not of this world. Although terrestrial empires are subject to constant revolutions, and their power, their splendour, are of such short duration, this kingdom will extend its boundaries still wider, even when time determines the last limit of their continuance to all sublunary monarchies. When all mortal thrones and dominions shall be consumed in one fervent blaze, when kings shall be reduced to an equality of rank with beggars, when no one shall be proprietor of aught over which he may rule, then will my reign first begin; then shall I first be raised to the highest honours, and possess all.—The kingdom of Jesus is not of this world. Majesties of the earth! pride not yourselves, nor be elate with haughtiness and power, when members of the kingdom of Christ stand before your judgment-seat, since our Ruler himself was called to your tribunal to be condemned by you. But soon will ye, mighty ones! stripped of all your gems and decorations, of all your authority, and of all your imposing pomp, crouch and shiver before that sentenced Christ; and we his worshippers and servants shall be exalted at his side, when all imperious scorners are doomed to eternal misery and disgrace.—The kingdom of Jesus is not of this world. Let emperors, kings, and heroes, set their glory in the conquest of states, and in the subjection of distant countries, in the humbling of the proud, and in spreading terror and destruction around—my King is a universal benefactor of mankind; it is his boast to do good, and to make all the dwellers of the earth happy. In his kingdom there is rest and security.—

The kingdom of Jesus is not of this world. This world, with all its riches and counterfeit pleasures, is too poor to reward a spirit under allegiance to Jesus. What is all that it can bestow upon me, in comparison with what I expect from the world to come?

Of all these truths my faith affords to me the strongest assurance. Wherefore then do I act so little in unison with this conviction? If the kingdom of Jesus, of which I am a subject, is not of this world, why is my heart still so firmly fettered to the earth? How can trifling vexations, and momentary sufferings, so soon disquiet and dishearten me? Why am I afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul? Why do I so shake with the fear of death, of judgment, and of eternity? Why do I strive with such vehement desire after the transitory goods which the passing world happens to offer to me? Could I possibly behave in this manner, if I were effectually convinced that the kingdom of Jesus is not of the present world?

What can I, what shall I answer to this question? I am not destined for the present world; I know that it is the future one for which I must form myself, in the hope of which I must direct my conduct, and which I ought to love and to prefer above every thing else. But earthly-disposed affections rob all my convictions of the influence, which they might otherwise exert over me. In this moment I feel the whole weakness of my heart. I reflect with what firmness thou, sole Sovereign of the universe! madest profession of thy dignity at the tyrannic bar of Pilate, although omnisciently instructed that this candour would expose thee to fresh outrages. If, then, I view myself as a subject of thy kingdom, I see how absolutely necessary

it is that I should seek, on all occasions, to proclaim thy glory, and lose no opportunity of acknowledging thee in the ears and before the faces of my fellow-men. But could I, indeed, well hold back, when I have thee thyself, O Lord ! for an example ?—I am at all places, and at all times, by duty bound to own thee, my gracious Sanctifier ! in whom I have been redeemed and baptised, by whom I have been acquired as an eternal property, and into whose kingdom I am incorporated. But how feeble do I discover myself to be towards this duty ! If I were challenged to combat for the dominion of Jesus ; if a despotic, hostile judge, or a threatening, powerful infidel should demand of me, “ Art thou a subject of the crucified Jesus ? ”—how little should I have the fortitude boldly to reply, “ Yes, I am his subject, and I glory in the title ; for I was born and redeemed to this end, to bear witness to the truth ! ”—Ah ! I much fear, that were I in danger of losing my ease, my fortune, my honour, my life, for the name of Christ, I should gladly abandon all my celestial claims to retain these vain possessions. I should, I am afraid, be but too prone to deem the favour of the powerful, the applause of the reputed wise, or the hope of worldly gain, a sufficient indemnification for the loss of my soul : at least, with these allurements to counterpoise my better will and choice, I should not discern, I but too justly doubt, the risk in which my everlasting welfare was placed. But if I should even enjoy for a time this worldly recompense, what would yet become of me, when in the hour of death all the kingdoms of the earth, and their magnificence, shall appear to me as dust ? What would it profit me, though all the gratifications, for which I had bartered the felicity of my immortal spirit, but of which I was

now become weary and satiated, were to present themselves before me with all their emptiness and nothingness?

Ah! let me never act so madly, as to prefer this world to heaven. Let it be held by me my highest privilege, that I am a subject of thy kingdom, and as such may participate in the hope of entering into those realms of glory, which thou hast won for all thy followers.

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## CONTEMPLATION XXII.

### *The Sufferings of Jesus at the Court of Herod.*

And as soon as Pilate knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus he was exceeding glad; for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. And Herod, with his men of war, set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.—LUKE, xxlii. 7—11.

NOTHING, amiable Jesus! can obscure thy greatness, and the innocence of thy heart. Whether thou seest thyself in the hands of despicable slaves, or art placed at the side of abandoned malefactors, every where thou art noble and lovely, and full of comfort for my faith. Truly, it seems to be humiliating for thy divine person, that thou must endure insult, mockery, and oppression, from the princes of the world, whose

power ought to shelter innocence; that Herod should dare to taunt thee with scoffing jeers, and collect his palace-menials to turn thee with vulgar insolence to jest. Yet ever remainest thou the King exalted above all. Princes, who are enabled to display their dignity by nothing farther than a few miles of territory, by exterior pomp, or a hired host of soldiers, would have made a pitiful figure under such circumstances. But thou, whose dominion is infinite, and whose glory is purity and truth, canst show thyself without blushing, without being humbled, before the sovereigns of the earth. What diminution could thy divine majesty receive from the throne of a petty tyrant? Could Herod, who was a king merely through the favour of Rome, injure thy might and right, which thou hadst of and through thyself alone from eternity? He, a voluptuary, an adulterer, the murderer of thy prophet, could he deface the benevolent innocence of thy life? could he darken the brilliant lustre of thy purity of spirit, and the merciful kindness of thy deeds? He, who merited all contempt, could he debase thee by his frivolous derision?

Still it was a most sensible misery for my Saviour to be doomed to stand in the palace of Herod as an object of the most degrading mockery. This blinded and thoughtless ruler had long desired to see Jesus, and his froward curiosity set him ever on the watch to obtain a nearer acquaintance with him. He was rejoiced, therefore, that he had at last an opportunity of speaking with and beholding an universally extolled and admired prophet. But when he did see him, and found nothing to satisfy his preconceived expectations, he scrupled not to expose to the scorn and derision of his sycophants and courtiers an innocent person, over

whom he had no just power.—Let the behaviour of Herod remind me of the conduct of that numerous class who profess Jesus out of vain and corrupt views ; who, under the semblance of a laudable desire of knowledge, seek to conceal an indecent spirit of disbelief, which reigns in their minds, and which fails not to betray itself, by its own pertness and intemperance ; or of those who presume arrogantly to question the acts of the divine Being. Let Herod be also a warning to me, how easily it may happen, that through undue curiosity or levity, I may come to despise Jesus, and thus fall into a state of most fatal infidelity.

Ah ! the depths of my heart are not to be sounded. Strongly as I am now prepossessed in favour of the truth of the gospel and of godliness, a depraved passion may master my feelings, which shall render me, if not abhorrent, at least indifferent towards all good. Those who now with such licentious blasphemy rail at God and his holy religion, were formerly, perhaps, only over-nice casuistical doubters, or vain investigators, who not, however, from any genuine love of truth, but from a prying temper and pride, gave themselves up to useless speculations. Such was their first condition, but shortly afterwards an untoward libertinism took possession of their minds, which induced them to ascribe more value to the sallies of wit than to the clearest demonstrations of reason : and then advancing farther in their viciousness, they allowed themselves at last to be carried to such a pitch of audacity, as to misapply the word of the Lord to witless and unmeaning pleasantries.—God preserve me from this excess of sin ! God preserve me from the ways that lead to it ! Far be it from me ever through wantonness of mind, or ill-timed inquisitiveness, to transgress against God and his sacred scripture !—To this end, I stand in

need, however, of all my circumspection. Though my heart were even not spoiled, yet the prevailing manners of high life may easily seduce me to condemn my Redeemer and his gospel. Ah ! not only under the gilded roofs of the abodes of princes, and in the mansions of the great, but also in the lowly dwellings of the poor and the mean, we meet with men in abundance, who comport themselves against the name of Jesus and his religion, just as Herod and his followers conducted themselves towards Jesus himself in person. And how much solicitude is required, if I would not be infected and carried away by the contagion of unbelief ! In this, as in all things that appertain to my salvation, my only security is in the assistance and compassion of my heavenly Father. Defend my heart then, O Lord ! from the delusions of the ungodly ; and grant that I may at all times, and under all circumstances, boldly confess thee now before the world, in order that I may not hereafter be covered with shame and confusion before thee on thy throne of judgment.

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### CONTEMPLATION XXIII.

#### *The Exchange of Jesus for Barabbas.*

Pilate saith unto them, I find no fault in him at all. But ye have a custom that I should release unto you one at the passover ; will ye, therefore, that I release unto you the King of the Jews ? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.—JOHN, xviii. 33—40.

SURELY the heavens themselves should be struck with terror and amazement at this, and tremble ex-

ceedingly ! Israel commits a double crime. She rescues a villanous thief from his merited punishment, and delivers over to death the guiltless Jesus ! The life of him who had shed the blood of man is spared, and *his* life is taken from him who had freed so many of the diseased from death, and even restored the already dead to fresh existence and health ! The wicked is endured, and the innocent is destroyed ! We may form as frightful a conception of this occurrence as it is possible for us to do, yet never will it be in our power fully to imagine the abominableness of the horrid transaction. It is at all times an act of extreme inhumanity, when innocence is yielded up a prey to the malice of its persecutors ; it is under all circumstances a crying instance of unrighteousness, when those who ought to be the refuge and the defenders of the guiltless become the instruments of their ruin. But when flagitiousness is carried so far, that all the laws of equity are overthrown, merely for the sake of injuring, nay murdering, an individual proved and declared to be altogether void of offence ; when vice is favoured in preference to virtue—this surpasses all that can be thought of as aggravating in cruelty and wickedness : and thus acted the Jews towards the immaculate Jesus. They were not contented with abandoning him to all the outrages of savage malignity, and becoming themselves the tools of his fiendish prosecution. They proceeded yet farther in their fury. When it came to the question to cut off from society either an assassin or a benefactor of his fellow-creatures ; to rid the world of Barabbas, or to deprive the human race of the aid and presence of Jesus ; what did they do ? even that which hell would do to promote the progress of vice, and prevent the diffusion and growth of piety ; they set



the robber and the homicide at liberty, and him that was spotless they dragged to execution.

But who can describe what Jesus must have felt under this indignant treatment? He was put in competition with a convicted bandit, and the sequel testified that he was held to be worse than this atrocious outcast of society. It was not solely the external disgrace that must have grieved him; for him the saddest idea was that his people, the people of his choice, refused and rejected him, and would not have him for their Saviour. During three long years had he painfully busied himself in seeking for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and consumed his strength in labours of love, for the welfare of this stiff-necked nation. His numerous miracles, his doctrine, his whole way of life, might have convinced them of his high destination and origin, or at least of his innocence; but now it became obvious that he had wrought to no purpose, and endeavoured to save their souls in vain. Through what great benefits had he not rendered himself an object of desert among his infatuated countrymen? And was this then the reward of his beneficent exertions, of his night-watchings, of his wearisome journeys, and of all the toils which he had undertaken for the weal and assistance of the wretched, that he should now be cast off for the behalf of a worthless reprobate? Must not this have wounded his soul to the innermost, to see that the very people for whom he had sacrificed himself beyond man's comprehension of the word should rate him at so low a price, that they almost unanimously desired and clamoured for his death, when even a worshipper of false deities, and a fierce stranger, was touched with pity for his undeserved distresses, and wished to rescue him from exe-

cution? Nevertheless, he bore this contumely likewise with unexampled patience. He considered not so much the wrongs which his foes did to him as the will of his Father, according to which he was to be reckoned among the evil doers; he considered not himself, but the whole human race, to whose atonement this misery was destined also to contribute: for at the moment at which Jesus was rejected by his own people, he bore the burden of the guilt which ought to rest on us, and procured for us this consolation and privilege, that we need not fear rejection from God.

But I cannot close my present meditation upon this mournful incident in the sufferings of Jesus, without deducing from it a few instructive lessons for my own heart. In the fate to which Jesus was here required to submit, in the accomplishment of his blessed enterprise, I conspicuously recognise the instability and the inconstancy of the multitude. That very people who, a few days before, had shouted *HOSANNA!* to Christ, and vied one with another in showing him respect and love, now raised against him vociferations of rage, and demanded his blood. How then can I rely upon the approbation of the many? How can I expect to enjoy unchangeable popularity and lasting attachment? To-day I shall, perhaps, be the object of adulation, and to-morrow deserted and vilified to the lowest degree of human debasement: and yet how tranquil may I remain under every vicissitude of fortune and opinion; provided I be conscious of my own integrity! How composed may I continue under all the calumnies, and all the artifices of the wicked, if my own heart bears me testimony, that I have walked uprightly both in the sight of God and of my brethren! Supposing,

therefore, that I should even be held in abomination by the world ; supposing that it should thrust me out of all society and companionship with men, it will be sufficient for me that I have the boast of a good conscience, and am dignified with the honour and favour of God ; and that beyond this present terrestrial abode I know there is a secure retreat whither I can flee, and dwell in everlasting glory and peace.

If we observe the ruling sentiments of the world, we need not be surprised that the Jews, in their choice between Jesus and Barabbas, decided so irrationally. In the principal point, the children of the world have still the same way of thinking. Still must Jesus ever experience the bitter lot, that sin, vanity, even Satan, are preferred before him. Light and darkness, freedom and slavery, virtue and vice, are placed by the Creator of all things before his reason-endowed creatures, to be selected at their option. But how do they employ the permission assigned to them ? “ Away,” they exclaim, “ with conscience ; give us lands and chattels ! Away with the freedom of the children of God ; give us the chains of sin ! Away with Jesus ; give us dignities and pleasures ! Away with heaven ; give us only the world ! ”—But how have I chosen ? Ah ! so long as I loved the world, and the lusts of the flesh, it was more agreeable to me to satisfy my depraved inclinations, than to take upon me the cross of Jesus. The brief gratification of my desires was more acceptable and pleasing to me, than the sweet feeling of the love of Christ. The wisdom of the world was more important in my eyes, than the wisdom of the cross of my Redeemer. How wretched should I now be, if I had been left to my own unguided discretion !—If I

choose not Jesus, I choose my own unhappiness ; if he departs from me, all grace, and all blessing, abandon me.

Into what indescribable wretchedness did the people fall, who here with such contumacy spurned Jesus from them ! They chose the curse, and it came upon them, and upon their children. From the moment they pronounced their detestable determination, Jesus deserted them, and in his place shepherds rose up over the stupified people, who led them into stray-ways,—murderers that destroyed them, seducers that hastened their total, irretrievable ruin.

No, my Jesus ! I will no longer act so inimically towards thee, so detrimentally to my own well-being. My choice is unalterably fixed. Away, O world ! with thy sins and joys ! I will make choice of Jesus and heaven ; I will be blessed, through the merits of my Redeemer, for ever and ever !

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## CONTEMPLATION XXIV.

### *The Terrible and Awful Imprecation of the Jews upon their own Heads.*

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person ; see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.—MATT. xxvii. 24, 25.

ASSUREDLY never was sinful wish or daring curse pronounced with so much solemnity and parade, with

such emphatical earnestness, with so much zeal and accord, and under such frightful and shocking circumstances as this. It was not an ebullition of suddenly excited rage, but a cool act of considerate, implacable wickedness. The people who uttered this imprecation knew the person and the character of Jesus Christ: they were eye-witnesses of his pure unsullied life: they had innumerable times heard the sacred doctrine which he preached, and beheld the wonders which he wrought. Pilate repeatedly endeavoured to persuade them to release Jesus; but the revengeful and blood-thirsty hearts of those whom he sought to move, could neither be tamed nor turned. They cried out, on every expostulation, more vehemently than before, Crucify him! crucify him! And when the heathen judge declared his full conviction of the innocence of his prisoner, and disclaimed all personal responsibility in regard to his death, they had the impious audacity to answer with a shout, His blood be on us and on our children!

And it came—this blood came upon them and upon their children. The direful imprecation recoiled in its entire magnitude upon their heads.—The nation that had assembled for the celebration of the paschal festival committed this heaven-crying iniquity; and the wrath of God overtook them at a second Easter-tide, when all the Jews were collected in a body and shut up like cattle in a slaughter-house, so that none of them could escape the devastating sword of the angry Romans. The rejection of the true Messiah was their crime now; and afterwards it was the grand source of all their calamity, that they were attentive to false Messiahs. By the execution of Jesus they sought to ward off the Romans from coming and taking away

from them their land and their kindred. And this very doom, which they thought to avert, was that by which they were struck : the Romans came and made captives and slaves of them ! Nor did the wrath of the Lord stop here : they were pursued by their invaders into all the corners of the world ; and even to this day, after having been fugitives for seventeen hundred years, they still remain a perpetual and living memorial of the deserved resentment of Heaven.

Could there be a clearer and more irrefutable proof of the divinity and the guiltlessness of Jesus than the accomplishment of this curse in the persons of his murderers ? What man can argue otherwise upon the subject than in such a strain as the following : No nation in the world has ever been so punished as this. Now, if the punishment of a whole people be the consequence of some heinous general sin, the state in question must have perpetrated such an abominable and flagitious deed as no other ever executed. And what else can be assumed as this unequalled flagrant deed, than the shedding of the blood of Jesus ? This blood, the guilt of which is thus avenged, was the blood of a perfectly innocent being, not of a deceiver : it was the blood of the Son of God, and of no mortal.—How inscrutable are the ways of Divine Providence ! In consequence of the scandal and offence of the cross, and the number of humiliating circumstances attending our Saviour's humiliation, the wise, the noble, and the mighty of the earth allowed themselves, in the early days of christianity, to be withheld from the acceptance of the faith. But the origin of the very prejudice which was in this manner formed against our blessed religion soon conducted to its advantage. When it was seen that they

who had slain Christ were visited with such remarkable and extraordinary punishment, men began to discern the supereminent dignity of the sufferer, and the infinite merits of his sufferings.

But what just fear of sins, which bring the wrath of God both upon single individuals and whole countries, ought the fate of the Jews to excite in the minds of all of us ! If the most cherished and beloved nation on the earth, the chosen people of God, lost, through their iniquity, all preference, all privilege, all favour and protection on the part of their heavenly King, what assurance have we, that, by slighting and condemning the testimonies of grace, we shall not share the same condemnation ? May not the kingdom of God, of which we are unworthy, be taken away from us, and bestowed upon a people yielding better fruits ? Ah ! let no one deny his Lord, who has redeemed him and purchased him with his own life : let no one venture to crucify him anew, or be mad enough to hold his doctrine in scorn. Were the Jews so terribly punished, how much more severe a chastisement shall we christians experience, if, against our own conviction, we trample the only Begotten of the Lord under our feet, and deem the blood of that covenant through which we are sanctified, unclean ?

Holy blood of my Redeemer ! be thou sanctified to me and by me for ever ! Thou shalt be my glory, my joy, and my consolation eternally. There is nothing in me but imbecility, incapacity, unworthiness, and poverty—yet still I have something of which I can boast ; namely, that I have been redeemed by the blood of the Son of God. Let this blood be on me for grace and pardon, for strength and for comfort !

And then, above all, when I shall appear, O Jesus ! before thy throne of judgment, let thy blood quicken and preserve me for the life everlasting.

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## CONTEMPLATION XXV.

### *The Scourging of Jesus.*

Then released he Barabbas unto them : and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.—MATT. xxvii. 26.

WERE angels capable of shedding tears of sorrow and compassion, they would have done so when the most innocent being that ever wore the semblance of one of the children of men—when the Son of God received this new outrage from the hands of remorseless wretches. What a spectacle ! Heaven veiled itself, as it were, in a robe of mourning at the sight, and all the triumph belonged to hell alone. What a spectacle ! Sinners, come hither and behold the stripes that cover his sacred body. Look upon him thus lashed, lacerated, and bleeding for your sake ; and, if ye have still so much humanity left to you, strike your bosoms and weep over your sins. Can ye count his wounds ? Can ye count the drops of blood that flow from them ? Against you each drop of blood witnesses, and each wound condemns you on account of your evil deeds. Ye yourselves ought to bear the whole punishment and curse to which he, for your salvation, is subjected : ye ought to bleed, and to die in your blood. But here he stands, the surety for your transgressions ! His beneficent hands are tied to that pillar which has been



so oft already sprinkled with the blood of guilty malefactors, that he may in infamy be counted among such. There, where the most atrocious murderers and robbers alone have hitherto received the well-merited penalty of their crimes, must the All-innocent groan beneath the audacious violence of the wicked and the barbarous. With savage fury they tear his garments, the only property which he can call his own, from his back. Rude soldiers, accustomed to view streams of blood without emotion, and to listen to the shrieks of despair without pity, brandish their cruel lashes over his naked body. Every stroke opens fountains of gore, and the points of the thongs dig, as it were, furrows on his shoulders and breast. There is no longer any part sound about him, and all his bones may be counted.

All ye who pass by, look and consider if ever there were pain like his pain! And ah! when ye see his hacked and mangled flesh, ye behold but the smallest portion of his distress. How may his heart be shaken by every blow, and his spirit be pierced through and through! How many sighs may he have stifled in his bosom, since, during the whole course of these inhuman injuries, he has not said a word!—And he might well keep silence! Every wound, every gush of blood spoke loudly enough, and every feature of his face discovered the deep anguish that had seized his entire soul. For even, under these scourges, he is an offering for the iniquity of the world; an offering to that bondage to which we, on account of our vices, were destined. Here is Jesus, for us, that which we should always have been, slaves to our sins, slaves to our lusts, and slaves to Satan. Through this ransom we have been liberated. The gashes indented upon him form an

image of our own iniquity. So disfigured, so horrible to behold, had sin rendered us; such scourges should we have received from the justice of God. Oh! thanks be ascribed to thee, my Redeemer, worthy of all praise, that thou hast purchased me at so dear a rate! Thanks; eternal thanks be given to thee, that thou hast been so graciously pleased to take upon thee the chastisement which ought to have fallen to my lot! Yet, approach still nearer, ye sinners! and abandon your hearts to the justest grief, that ye have occasioned to the Holy and the Righteous One so much pain and trouble by your sins. Debauchees! ye that practise the defilements of the flesh, can ye see and reflect how despitely the hallowed person of your Jesus was treated; and continue to serve your base passions, continue to indulge and gratify your own pampered bodies, continue to study the excitement of agreeable corporeal sensations, and to pursue all the abominable joys of uncleanness? Barbarians! misanthropes! enemies of mankind! tyrants! ye who are cruel enough to laugh when nothing resounds around you but cries and lamentations, ye, who, without a check of compassion, torment your brethren with inhuman severities, can ye persevere in being the torturers of your fellow-creatures, and hardened executioners of innocence, when ye regard the innocent tortured Saviour? Profligates! ye, who, without feeling, rush forward from crime to crime, think, and let all sinners think, of the lashes which Jesus underwent for you. Ye would commit your sins with pleasure, when they have heaped such ignominy and distress upon the immaculate Son of the Most High! Ye would sport on triumphantly in profane delights, when he was ready to sink under the burden of his woes! Ah! his bleeding form, his

lacerated limbs, his numberless stripes and gashes ought to swim ever before your eyes, and be constantly present to your minds. Perhaps the tears and the wounds of the innocent Sufferer will move your insensible hearts : —And what else will move you if this scene of torture do not stir up within you all the sorrowful affections of human nature ? Does not the sight of Jesus in his excruciating pangs affright you ? then neither would hell affright you although its fiery abyss were to open at your feet.

No, I am not yet so detestably callous. Even now, when at such an interval, I view the torments of my Saviour, I cannot help bursting spontaneously into tears at the picture traced by my imagination. Ah ! how I should have wept in torrents, and sunk to the ground under the pressure of the weightiest grief, if I had been an actual spectator of his countless agonies ! But would that these tears might bring my heart into such a state of emotion, that I might also avoid all that drew such afflictions upon him ! Would that I might, in my intercourse with the world, amid the boisterous tumult of vain joys, and under the temptation of sin, remember the sufferings of Jesus with the same feelings as those which I now possess in this moment of retired meditation ! How easily I should then be preserved from such actions as would goad my conscience ! How few charms would vice display to me if I always considered its consequences, and the misery which it might occasion to my soul ! Then would this part also of the afflictions of my Saviour, which I now in particular contemplate, tend to my unspeakable comfort. In his wounds I should discover my healing, in his pains my ease, in his blood my purification, and in his punishment my liberation.

Perhaps the Lord may think fit to punish me too; and if it then seem to me incomprehensible how his chastisements should be a sign of his love, if it sting me the most acutely that he gives his rod into the hands of men who, bearing great grudge against me, strike me with extreme rancour and multiply my wounds, I will then call thee to recollection, my martyred Redeemer! Thou wast the beloved Son of the Father, and yet he afflicted thee so severely! How can I therefore be discontented if my heavenly Parent inflict a small portion of sufferings upon me too? Let then my foes, in their ferocity, overwhelm me with every sort of ill usage; the strokes that I shall receive from their rage and wickedness are determined, and they can go no farther, nor inflict one blow more than the Lord allows them. For Jesus' sake all my troubles will conspire to my bliss.

In this moment the thought of my death occurs to me. I have often seen the dying so agonised by the vehemence of the disease in their body, that they no longer seemed human. And what will become of me when I also shall one day lie on my death-bed? What a bruised and stricken creature I shall be! But I may yet be happier than my Saviour could. There will surely be friends who will bewail me, who will strive to comfort and refresh me. Even my enemy will then, at the sight of my distress, forget his hatred, and mournfully sympathise with me. And though these alleviations should not be granted to me, yet thou, O Jesus! for the sake of thy surmounted sufferings wilt be mindful of me. The lively view of thy wounds through faith will fortify my heart, and recreate it with heavenly consolation. The hope of my future glorification—Oh! how will this raise me erect, though my wretched

tabernacle of dust totter and fall! For as thou art now exalted above all outrage and suffering, so shall I hereafter enter into that state, where no more misfortune will reach my new and perfect body. Then will I eternally thank thee, that thou hast been wounded and tortured for me.

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## CONTEMPLATION XXVI.

### *Jesus Derided and Mocked.*

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they bowed the knee before him and mocked him saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.—MATT. xxvii. 27—30.

THE farther I proceed in the history of the suffering Jesus, the greater is the accumulation of misery which I discover. The nearer my Saviour approaches to death the more frequent are his insults, the more poignant his pangs. More than eight hours were elapsed, during which interval he had been forced to endure all that is most terrible and frightful to man, without being able to snatch a breathing moment to recover himself a little, or to collect his strength: new torments assailed him in continual succession. Still was his body seamed and scarified, and his flesh raw from the numberless lashes which had been inflicted upon him by the rage of his persecutors; all his limbs were bruised, and from his neck downwards there was

no part of him whole. And yet hell meditates fresh torments, with which the supremely Innocent is to be still more grievously afflicted. Hitherto his countenance had remained free from laceration, though always tinged with the ensanguined sweat of the mount of Olives, and dishonoured by the vile spittle of serpent malice. Now shall this sacred visage also drip with gore. They set a crown of thorns upon his brows, and in order to thrust the prickles deep into his temples, take a staff, which they had tauntingly placed in his hand for a sceptre, and strike his aching head, thus encircled with the spiny wreath. At the same time they bend their knees before him in scoffing reverence. They approach him to spit in his face, and they buffet his cheeks !

At which ought I to be the more astonished, at the barbarity of the enemies of Jesus, or at the patience with which he bore the flagrant atrocities of this savage band ? It was in his power instantly to deprive of vigour the arms that were stretched out to wound him, or even to smite dead every one of these remorseless men ; yet he endured his sorrows with patience. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth : he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. What man would not abandon his heart to the fiercest transports of anger, if, contrary to his deserts, he should be made to experience such disgrace and harshness of treatment ? If I may judge from my own conduct under small grievances what I should evince under weighty injuries, I plainly see how little fortitude and constancy I should be able to display. Oh ! my Jesus ! would that I might yet learn from thee to be gentle and resigned ! Allowing that my

situation were even a thousand times worse than it really is, my sufferings, in comparison to what thou hast undergone, must still be as a bubble of water to the ocean. The sin which now frets and vexes me galled thee still more deeply. The misery which now dejects me has shaken thee far more violently. In my troubles I enjoy at least this solace, that I possess friends among whom I find tender and affectionate souls, and who feel the strongest compassion for my distresses: but thou hadst no one to cheer thee, no one that even showed a spark of pity for thy fate. In my misery I have at least the comfort of knowing that it must soon come to an end. But that which renders thy sufferings the most bitter is, that thou must still always bear the opposition and the abuse of the vicious. What they formerly practised against thy person they practise at this day against thy gospel.

Now, however, in my calamities I will incessantly think of thee who didst endure such cruel and furious insults from thy adversaries, that I may not be weary in suffering, or feeble in courage. Thy afflictions shall teach me to bear mine the more patiently. Why should I desire to wander through paths of roses when thou hadst to pass through such a briery wilderness? If I am compelled—and it must be principally through my own folly—to submit to acts of violence from my fellow-men, to injustice, to envy, to persecution, why should I complain over my destiny, when to thee, the Infallible, it was ordered to know all these things in their greatest severity? If I am wrongfully vilified and slighted, how can this so much affect me with vexation, when I consider thy degrading insults and the immensity of thy torments? And how can I expect to lead a life void of all distress, when the life of the

best and most holy Being that ever the world saw, was so replete with pain and affliction? He is my King, and I am his subject: would it then be decent for me to seek more honour and joy than he could obtain?

I am now contemplating the sufferings of my Saviour from only one point of view, nor is it properly that which Jesus, as the Mediator of mankind, presents to me under these injuries done to his most sacred person. It is not to be thought that Christ suffered unalterably these, and no other afflictions, without a correspondent appropriate cause. In order merely to afford to me an example how I ought to demean myself under similar tribulation, this peculiar debasement was not necessary, for a very small portion of the human race is exposed to fall into circumstances in all, or even in a few respects, coinciding with those of Jesus. I am completely convinced, that the design of Christ, in this special manner of suffering, aimed at much higher effects. I am not ashamed, in contradiction to the fashionable sentiments of our times, to confess that I find in the crowning him with thorns, and in all the outrages connected with it, a proof of the universality of the satisfaction made by Christ.

The King of Kings is crowned with thorns!—were not thus such sins to be punished in him as, under the protection of royal crowns, are secured from the animadversion of human laws? Those whom Providence has drawn forth out of the dust, intrusting to them diadems, the purple, and the sceptre, misuse but too often their power and authority. Cruelty, injustice, tyranny, and bloodshed remain, in general, unavenged in those who, by their rank in the world, have made themselves, as it were, invulnerable and unassailable. Here God punishes in his sovereign Son



all the sins of the high and mighty, and the pangs of his crown of thorns atone for the acts of injustice committed with impunity by the powerful and mighty of the earth. And when I see the Redeemer with his crown of thorns, and under the diversified obloquy of his enemies, I think of you, ye proud ! ye ambitious ! ye inordinate lovers of dominion ! How many means do ye not employ to raise yourselves into exaltation, and to satisfy the pride of your hearts ? Ye trample the heads of the lowly and humble under your feet, in order to lift up your own foreheads the loftier. Ye make others, your equals by nature and equity, contemptible, that ye may become great, and of much respect. Ye violate the rights of the forlorn and destitute, that ye may extend your own prerogatives more amply. Ye labour day and night to procure a transitory, perishable crown, which ye can hardly retain till your vain dignified brows kiss inanimate their kindred earth. When Jesus bore his ignominious garland of thorns, ah ! then it was that he did penance for your aspiring views of power and grandeur, and made atonement for your imperious loftiness of mind.

Despised King of glory ! honour and praise be ascribed to thee through all eternity ! Behold I lay my arrogant heart down before thee, that it may be humbled by thy aspect. As often as my soul shall swell with idle elation will I think of thy ignominy ; and be this thy ignominy dearer to me than all that the world prizes as distinction and renown. The children of the world may strive after earthly crowns and frivolous titles ; they may desire to be idolized, extolled, and flattered. I will desire nothing farther than the glorification which thou hast gained for me through thy endured indignities.

## CONTEMPLATION XXVII.

*The Affecting Spectacle of the Suffering Jesus Exposed to Public View.*

Pilate, therefore, went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!—  
JOHN, xix. 4, 5.

BEHOLD the man ! Sinners ! behold him, and take his ignominy to heart. Perhaps ye are now on the point of dishonouring your Lord anew, by your evil deeds ? Yet before ye resolve upon the perpetration of this most scandalous offence, behold the tortured Jesus, and see how lamentably your iniquities have disfigured him, and robbed him of all comeliness and dignity ! If this spectacle make no impression upon your hearts, what then shall affect you ? Not the presence of death, nor the grave, nor the day of everlasting retribution, nor eternity, nor the very flames of hell. Let it be enough, that you have hitherto hardened your souls against every milder and better emotion. God has presented to you many objects, which should have roused you from your insensibility. How often have ye heard his thunder in the clouds, and seen the fatal fire of his lightning ! How many of the wicked brought to destruction through their excesses has not the Lord placed before your eyes as a warning beacon of his anger ! How many of the dying have ye not seen in their last anguish, in their deadly sweat, and under the terrors of the impending judgment ! And amid all

these terrific alarms ye continued destitute of feeling. Let, however, the spectacle of Jesus in his excruciating distress obtain some power over your hearts. What would ye still think of the gratifications of your pride and your ambition? Behold Jesus, and mark how humbled he is through your haughtiness, and degraded to the vilest condition of the most atrocious malefactor—ye would pursue the noisy pleasures of the world, and the wanton delights of the vicious passions? Ah! **BEHOLD THE MAN!** He could have possessed a plenitude of joys, but he voluntarily took upon himself all pain and anguish, to expiate your wild gratifications. You would continue to covet beyond measure the goods of the world?—**BEHOLD THE MAN!** See how your pride has bereft him even of his garments. Oh!—his nakedness, his weary and exhausted frame—who can see them, and not condemn his own desire of wealth and luxury? **BEHOLD**—if you would know what sort of creatures ye are by nature, and what hideousness, that makes monsters of you, dwells in your bosoms—**BEHOLD THE MAN!** behold this so inhumanly treated being! Even that very Pilate, even those soldiers, even those Jews are ye who tortured Jesus, and in his torments found savage entertainment. Ye are filled with the same wicked desires which inspired them to use the Son of God with such malignancy. Ye have the very same mercilessness which rendered those slaves so ferocious, that they were audacious enough to revile, and mock, and agonise, the Most Holy. And since ye continue so indifferent amid all the vexations which ye cause to your innocent brethren; since ye can laugh with hellish assurance, when the just and the upright weep; since ye are capable of all cruelties, in order to satiate your domineering spirit and revenge-

ful tempers, and your voluptuous inclinations, ye would indubitably act as these barbarians did, if your Saviour were again to appear in his then humble shape. He who can hate his fellow-men, and, above all, he who can hate innocence, and persecute and torment it—he would be also able to hate, and persecute, and torment Jesus himself. O sinners! would that ye might, at the spectacle of your martyred Saviour, reflect upon yourselves! Oh! that ye might recognise in him the great devastation which sin has produced in human nature! Look, and see what grief it has brought upon your divine Surety, through your transgressions! All his sufferings portray to you what your sins have merited. His pains indicate to you the torments which will hereafter eternally afflict you, if here ye continue to slight his reconciliation. Ah! what outcast, wretched beings will ye hereafter become, if ye will not here open your hearts to the extreme ignominy of Jesus!

BEHOLD THE MAN!—Thus I cry out to you too, O sinners! whose conscience is awakened, and who possess at least a lively sense of your iniquities. Now ye know yourselves in the fiendish shape, which makes you an abomination to your Creator and your God. Hitherto ye esteemed yourselves happy in the exercise of your vices. But now, thanks be to the grace of Jesus! now ye perceive how inhuman sin has rendered you; now ye are aware of the great disorder and infamy into which iniquity has plunged you.—“What a man I am!”—says each of you—“how deeply I am fallen! How detestable my misdeeds have caused me to become! What an abhorrent thing I am grown to God, and to the angels, and to all the righteous! How can I lift up my eyes, miserable and accursed, and lost wretch that I am?”—Desponding souls! BEHOLD

**THE MAN!**—through him the whole mortal race has been absolved and received into grace. In that profundity of misery, contempt, and pain, must he that was without blemish be overwhelmed, in order to raise you up out of your shame and disgrace. In him ye perceive what ye were to have been, what ye have deserved to be, and what ye may really yet become. Ye would have been eternally hateful to God, and to the saints, as he was for a time to the world; ye would have been rejected by the Lord for ever; but now, through this afflicted Redeemer, ye have been made acceptable to your heavenly Father, and may indulge the high hope hereafter to obtain for his endured humiliations—yourselves thereto consenting, by repentance and good works—the crown of perpetual glory.

**BEHOLD THE MAN!**—**BEHOLD HIM,** ye godly! and be excited, by the view of his woes, ever more and more ardently, truly, and constantly to love him who out of love for you was so degradingly vilified, and so injuriously treated and profaned. What would ye do, if ye had a friend, who in your stead should come forward, of his own free impulse, and undertake all your hardships and afflictions? Would not your bosoms be transported with the most tender affection towards him? And what do ye not owe to your best, most faithful friend and benefactor, who has done infinitely more for you than ye could have expected from your truest, nearest, and most sincere kinsmen and associates? What do his lacerated, bleeding body; his streaked, scarred countenance; his broken, agonised heart, demand from you?—Love—they all demand from you love: and ye cannot, without being barbarously cruel, and stupidly insensible, deny this most just tribute. Though he required from you, that ye

should experience all the despite and scorn of the world, that like him ye should bear the lashes of brutality, and the fury of insatiable malice; though he should claim from you, as a proof of the integrity of your attachment, that ye should take upon yourselves a portion of his sufferings, could ye shrink back from this duty? Oh! all that ye could encounter would be as nothing to that which your Redeemer was impelled to sustain for you. He desires not from you, however, such a hard, such a sanguinary sacrifice. All that he asks from you is, that ye love him for his sufferings' sake, and continue unalterably true to him. Now then with firm resolution prepare yourselves anew for this so equitable and pleasing obligation. Vow to your Redeemer to prize him with your whole soul, and never for a moment to forget what he has obtained for you through his sufferings.

BEHOLD THE MAN!—BEHOLD HIM, ye Christians in distress!—For I can well suppose, that many of you who shall follow me in these contemplations will be such as, through sickness, poverty, and adversity, are become very wretched and pitiable objects—and what else can I say to you in your troubles, for the assuagement of your minds, than this: “See what a man of sorrows your Jesus is!” I will not, in my calculation of your condition, detract aught from your necessities. I will believe that ye are indeed very straitly pressed, that ye are exceedingly grieved creatures. But if your calamities were really augmented to the last stretch of your imagination, would ye even then be exposed to so much misery as Jesus endured? Ye are despised; but will the contempt which you receive ever reach that high point to which it arose in reference to your Saviour? Ye are full of wounds and

sores ; but a friend, perhaps, will come, who shall bind up the former, and pour oil into the latter. Perhaps ye are very martyrs in affliction ; but ye will still be sought for by compassionate hearts that will comfort you, and strive to lighten your woes : ye will not at least be mocked under your sorrows ; ye will surely find some spot where ye may rest yourselves. Yet Jesus, in his unutterable trials, had none of these alleviations. And have ye not actually merited, through your own faults, all that ye endure ; while Jesus had to endure all his tremendous visitations, even on account of his very innocence?—Oh ! strengthen, strengthen yourselves, tired, stricken souls ! by the view of your suffering Redeemer. Collect out of his distresses consolation for your pierced hearts. Willingly accept every cup that your Father presents to you ; and learn, by the example of your oppressed, afflicted, wronged, and persecuted Jesus, how to be tranquil even amid the roughest shocks of fortune.

BEHOLD THE MAN !—Thus I may with good reason address those whom impending death has robbed of almost all. We shall all of us, sooner or later, fall into such a state that all who see us will say : “ Behold the man ! see what a creature he is ; how pale, how down-cast, how loathsome ! How dark are these eyes ; how distorted are these features ; how totally disfigured is this form ! ”—Oh ! then, then must the view of the tortured God incarnate cheer us, and his pangs inspire our souls with confidence.—Yet this is not all the degradation that awaits us. When we shall be covered up in the ground, how horrible will our appearance then become ! All the living will say, as they haste from the disgusting spectacle of our mouldering bones, “ Behold the man ! Look what a thing lies there ! ”—

But how much the more do I hence rejoice to think of the day, when my human nature will be made a perfect, celestial one! Then will all the angels, and all the blessed of heaven, shout in exultation; “Behold the man!—how great, how glorious, how happy he is!”

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## CONTEMPLATION XXVIII.

### *The Last Progress of Jesus to his Death.*

Then delivered he (Pilate) him, therefore, unto them to be crucified; and they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a scull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha.—JOHN, xix. 16, 17.

TREMBLE not thy walls, O Jerusalem, now thou art left by him who brought to thee weal and blessing within them? Wretched city! what will thy palaces, thy sanctuaries become, when he is carried away from thee, to whom thou owest that they are not yet a heap of ashes? Poor, sick at heart, and forlorn, to whom wilt thou now be able to fly, when thy physician and thy supporter is taken from thee?—Who now, O sinner! will preach and bring to thee salvation on healing wings, when he quits thee who consumed his whole benevolent life in this employment? Jerusalem! woe to thee, woe to thy children, woe to thy proud mansions! Ah! considerest thou not that which conduces to thy peace? Thy Benefactor now departs from thy abode. Ah! he will not return to thee so bloody, so despised as he went forth. He will not come back to thee with so much blessing and grace, as at the time



when he first entered thy gates. When he shall appear again—oh ! tremble for thy palaces, for thy sanctuaries, for thy children !—Avenging wrath will attend him on his left hand, and destruction on his right. Thou wilt no longer exult in thy furious insolence, thou wilt weep, thou wilt execrate thyself, and expire in the midst of thy own execration.

Let Jerusalem be a warning example to me, that I may not, through sin and wickedness, lose for myself, O Jesus ! thy presence and thy favour ! What would be my end wert thou to forsake me, and take away from me the spirit of grace ? Alas ! all the pleasures of the world, and all its glories, could neither repair nor replace this forfeiture. If I have not thee for my friend, what can heaven, what can hell do for me ? What can revive me, when my soul and body languish ? What can indemnify me, when I shall be stripped of all temporal goods in the hour of inevitable death ?—Yes, of this last transition I will be especially mindful. So long as I am in health and prosperity, I value not thy presence so much as I ought to do. But a moment will come, when I shall be compelled to relinquish every thing, when I shall be obliged to dispense with every thing, only not thee, not the consolation of thy merits. Ah ! how ardently shall I then long after thee ! how anxiously shall I then seek thy grace ! and if I should seek it at that emergency in vain, ah ! Jesus ! how wretched should I be !

But now my thoughts involuntarily return to the mournful history before me. This is the last progress that my Saviour made in his degradation. How many uneasy wanderings, during his pilgrimage in the world, was he constrained to undertake ! How many dreary journeys had wearied him, during his thirty years' re-

sidence on the earth ! But this final pass was incontestably the hardest for him. He was quite worn out by so many grievous torments, and the way he had to go led him to the spot appointed for his ignominious and painful death.—Something like this will also be one day my fate. After all the many wanderings and changes of place that I may have made on the earth, one migration still remains, which will be very hard for my flesh : I must go to the place of the corruption of the body, and, what is still more serious and important, to the tribunal of my God. I wish that I could go with as composed a mind out of the world, as that with which Jesus went out of Jerusalem.—Through thee I am able, if I will, to do so, O Prince of blessedness ! Faith in thee will strengthen me on my last dark road, that I come not to destruction, nor meet with harm. Through thy death-going thou hast procured succour and solace for all those who, like thee, must walk through the valley of death.

I will, therefore, find satisfaction for myself, and take pleasure, my Redeemer ! in tracing thy sad path to dissolution. Thou carriedst thyself, at the commencement of thy route, thy own cross. What an inexpressible smart must this burden have occasioned to thy gory shoulders ! Ah ! perhaps, when I shall be summoned to enter upon the track of death, a cross will also be laid upon my back. The nearer I draw to my end, the greater will be the load that I shall have to bear ; but it will be no cross, pressing me down under its weight to the ground ; no burden, under which I must of necessity faint and succumb. In order to alleviate my last moments of extremity, thou, my Redeemer, hast felt the entire heaviness of mortality.—Thanks be given to thee also for this far-

ther evidence of thy love! Hereafter, when I shall stand on the precincts of the grave, I will yet praise thee for every step thou trodest towards the scene of thy life-giving death.

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### CONTEMPLATION XXIX.

#### *The Relief afforded to Jesus on the Way to his Execution.*

And as they came out they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name ; him they compelled to bear his cross —MAT. xxvii. 32.

JESUS had now proceeded a great part of the distance between Jerusalem and Golgotha, but the greater and more grievous portion still remained. The fatigue of his body increased so materially, that he was in danger of sinking under the weight of the cross. His enemies, not from compassion, but, in all probability, from apprehension that he might expire on the way, took the tree of crucifixion from him, and laid it upon a stranger just arrived from a journey which he had made to Jerusalem, with the view of here performing at the Easter festival his accustomed devotions.—This circumstance, apparently insignificant as it may be deemed, is of most consolatory importance for me. In this manner God is gracious to grant to us his children, if not always full deliverance—for this the omniscient decrees of his providence will not, for our own good, permit—relief at least under our worst afflictions. He measures the burden which he lays upon me according to the strength or the weakness of my shoulders ; and

if I am in danger of fainting under it, he can order a thousand occurrences, apparently altogether casual, which are able to contribute in a large degree to my temporary or lasting recovery, agreeably to his own wise counsels.—It appeared to be the result of a mere ordinary accident, that a stranger should reach this point of his destination so nearly at the time at which Jesus set forward for Golgotha. But this event took place through the most wise appointment of the Lord. This man had been chosen and elected to administer a transitory assuagement and succour to Christ in his great need; and incidents, in themselves of the least note, had, as in the usual train of things, to concur to this momentous object. Who can tell, even in regard to me, what friend will be led to me by the hand of God to succour me in my distress? Who can tell what remote alien is selected to assist me in my poverty, in my orphanage, or in my sickness? Who can explain what series of trivial circumstances the Lord will knit together for my rescue in my necessities? Perhaps even my most inveterate enemy will be forced to be helpful to me in my embarrassment, and to become an instrument of my happiness. This much at least is certain, that though I stagger, and seem ready to expire under my burden, still I shall not sink and be overcome. The Lord, who is great in counsel, and mighty in deed, will be able in various ways to support me.

Simon, who was thus honoured by carrying the cross after Jesus, was the father of two sons, who subsequently became christians, and even preachers of the gospel. It is more than probable that this individual received, on the present occasion, his first impression of the truth and divinity of the person of Christ, and

that thus the first foundation was laid towards his accepting the christian doctrine. Thus does the Omniscient finally turn to our greatest good those events which, at the beginning, are the most disagreeable to us. How repugnant must it not have been for Simon to be compelled to perform the contemptible task of bearing the cross of a condemned man to the place of execution ! But how often afterwards would he not praise the goodness of the ways of Heaven, when he called to mind that this toilsome disgrace had brought him to the knowledge of Jesus, and of the truth of his preaching ! And I also shall have the occasion of a similar experience, under the sufferings which may be allotted to me. If it should please God to assign to me a portion of the adversities of life, I should likewise, at the commencement, hold it for a severe ordinance ; but the longer I carried my cross, the more I should perceive how salutary it was for my soul, and for my real welfare ! The poverty in which I must perhaps pine will render the riches of grace so much the more precious to me. Through the disease of my body, I shall be excited to think of the health of my immortal spirit. The contempt which I shall meet from the world will prompt me to seek honour with God. The loss of that which was dearest to me in existence will serve as an instigation to me to exert myself so much the more strenuously to conciliate the friendship and the love of the Lord. In short, all occurrences that befell me will become subservient to the promotion of my salvation, if I only apply them rightly. I shall then receive the strongest impulse and encouragement to praise the wise and beneficent providence of God, even for his hardest trials, and to accept the cup of the cross out of his hands with a willing

heart.—But what a discrepancy do we find between the relative situations of Jesus and Simon of Cyrene ! Both bear the cross, but each in a different manner. Our Saviour received it with a ready and cheerful mind upon his back ; he did not allow himself to be previously forced to do so by a higher power. Simon took it up from compulsion. Through this the dissimilarity of the nature and conduct of cross-bearers in general is depicted. True christians carry their cross with joy ; the children of the world with aversion and disgust. He who is giving way every moment under the weight of his cross, considers it as a most lamentable scourge of his cruel destiny, and accommodates himself to it, on the whole, with an unwilling, murmuring spirit, is yet far distant from being a real follower of Christ. Instead of the cross being to such a man a furtherance and incentive on the road to sanctification, it proves much rather an obstacle, and a cause of delay. There remains, therefore, no surer way of attaining to a union with the Saviour, than that of voluntarily bowing our necks to the yoke of the cross, bearing it patiently, and submitting, as if we were offering up a free sacrifice to the Redeemer, to that which is in and for itself unavoidable necessity.

I will, I will, my dearest Jesus ! even in trouble, be like to thee. Lay thou the load which is apportioned to me, upon my shoulders ; I will neither falter, nor hesitate to carry it. Into what solemn obligations did I enter at my baptism, when I was first enrolled in thy service ! There I promised to thee most sacredly, that under thy banners I would courageously fight against sin, the world, and Satan ; and to my latest breath adhere, as a faithful champion, loyal to thy name. How little have I hitherto satisfied the terms

of this covenant! Instead of exercising myself in the denials, and in the sterner duties of christianity, I have chosen the gratification and the amusement of the senses. Instead of resigning myself gladly to the sufferings which thy equitable governance has appointed to me in the general distribution, I have rebelled against thee on thy slightest inflictions, and angrily spurned away thy hand. Instead of crucifying my lusts, I have hung to them with all my desires. Oh! would that thou mightst be pleased to let thy rejected hand have still so much force over me, that even in the midst of sorrows I may follow after thee without repining! Only strengthen me, my God! that I may be able to support all that thou destimest to me of affliction, with never-murmuring contentment. Draw me with the bands of thy love ever nearer to thee, and ever farther from the world. Will I not submit to know the least calamity, when my Saviour has felt the utmost bitterness of misery? Were not my old paths of sin entangled and strewed with many briars? ah! why then should I flee from a few thorns in the ways of righteousness? Jesus will not leave the least burden that I sustain unrewarded. For my small trouble he will let the blessing of his cross come upon my children, as the sons of Simon of Cyrene reaped long afterwards a blessing, in consequence of the faithfulness of their father towards him. And though even this recompense should fail, eternity will make amends to me for all that I have been here called upon to sacrifice, to renounce, or to suffer. My affliction, which is temporal, procures for me a glory beyond all measure great, and which is everlasting. Thither will I, therefore, direct my intellectual eyes, and delight my soul with the spiritual anticipation of the joys in secure reserve for me

in the life to come ; and in this life take up and carry my cross meanwhile with pleasure, for at length the way of the cross will conduct me to heaven too.

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### CONTEMPLATION XXX.

#### *Mount Golgotha.*

And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, the place of a scull.—MARK, XV. 22.

EVERY circumstance in the sufferings of Jesus is of importance to a soul desirous of usefully contemplating the expiatory death of the Redeemer. I will now, therefore, in this still hour of meditation, reflect upon the particular place in which my Saviour endured his last pangs. And here also I shall discover many secrets of the wisdom and goodness of God.

Jesus was to suffer the death of atonement without the walls of Jerusalem. At the first view, indeed, nothing farther seems to have happened to Christ in this appointment than what the custom of most nations brought with it, the capital punishment of culprits being usually carried into execution on the outside of the towns. But Jesus might also have met his death, like Zacharias, in the forecourt of the temple. He might likewise, in order to avoid all concourse of the people, have been cut off privately in the synagogue or in the palace of the high priest. And perhaps we may imagine, that it would have been more befitting the sanctity of the person of Christ if he had closed his life in the temple, or some other celebrated place



in Jerusalem. God would certainly, it may be judged, have honoured his Son, even in his death, if he had ordained his crucifixion to occur in the metropolis of the Jewish land, and in the most sacred edifice of that city. But the Lord's thoughts are not as our thoughts. According to the explanation afforded by Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth verses of the thirteenth chapter, the offerings, which were else burned on the altar in the sanctuary, must, on the day of expiation, be carried beyond the precincts of the camp, and there consumed to ashes. In this there was something typical. It was hereby to be shown, that Jesus, the counterpart of the Israelitish sin-offering, should be cast out of the community of men. And this was the case, as his death was brought to pass out of the gates of Jerusalem. In this event we are taught, that temple-sacrifices had now an end, and that God would thenceforth have no pleasure in a creature-offering, after having accepted the self-offering of his own Son. By his going out of the gates to suffer death, it was farther to be intimated to us, that the benefits of his dying should not be confined to the children of Israel, but be extended over the whole world. Hence rests the obligation on us to hasten forth to him without the camp, and to bear his reproach. Now must the canon of the Levitical law no longer bind us. Now it must be our chief solicitude how we may become participators in the sacrifice which Jesus has offered up. Nothing must prevent us from submitting to the sufferings which may assail us in the following and imitating of Christ. Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come, into which all shall be received with welcome who have gone after the Lord Jesus.

Jesus was to die on mount Golgotha. This hill is, in all respects, remarkable; it formed a part of the eminence of Moriah, on which Isaac was to have been immolated. It was, on account of the use made of it, peculiarly disgraceful for the terminating scene of life, all malefactors being there publicly deprived of existence. Now, by our Saviour being slain on this spot, the most important purposes were, through God's wisdom, effected. It was an object of the most urgent and indispensable consequence, that a full conviction of the certainty of the Saviour's death should be afforded to all. But to how many doubts would this fact have been exposed if a private place had been selected for its perpetration? Let us suppose that Jesus had been murdered in the temple, or in any other place, where both his friends and foes could not have been eye-witnesses of the catastrophe; how could the unbelieving have been refuted, or the weak in faith corroborated? It might then have been easily objected, that perhaps the favourers of Jesus had bribed others to spread the report of their Master's death, but had not actually perpetrated it. It might also have been said, among many other allegations, that Jesus was but fallen into a swoon when he was believed to be dead. In a word, the adversaries of Jesus would have had the opportunity, whether feignedly or not, to look upon his death, and to speak of it, as a well-devised fraud, and to treat his resurrection as a falsehood. But all these exceptions and pleas of incredulity were defeated by Christ's suffering in the common place of execution, and so placing the assurance of his death beyond all doubt. The Jewish people could thus see him carried out. They could see that the man who had been arrested and made prisoner only the night

before was the very same that now hung on the cross. They could observe in him the gradual diminution of his strength, and the approach of his death. They were enabled to hear his last words with which he resigned his soul into the hands of his Father. They saw that, for the better assurance of his death, a spear was thrust into his side, forming a wound which would itself have deprived him of existence if any spark of life had still remained in him. They had the opportunity of being spectators of all the preparations made for his funeral, as well as of his interment itself. These incidents were severally sufficient to convince every rational person of the reality of our Saviour's mortal extinction. And God, for this reason, decreed, that his Son's earthly course should finish publicly on the common place of execution.

And could Jesus have manifested his obedience towards his Father and the greatness of his humiliation more evidently, than by undergoing his sentence on this most infamous spot? The place of his doom must increase the bitterness of his death. He was thus ranked in the same class with the most odious malefactors, and all the prophecies referring to this circumstance were carried into accomplishment. As it had been intimated, ages before, that he should be esteemed among the transgressors, and that men would, as it were, hide their faces from him; as Moses had fore-shown that Israel would come to value the rock of salvation at so small a price that it would be hung up by the people as carrion; so on this occasion all these predictions concerning him were fulfilled in Jesus. It was also, perhaps, intended, that by the manner of his death he should realize the type of the brazen serpent: this image was erected in the middle of the field

where so many of the Israelites had been killed by the venomous bite of this species of reptile. Jesus chose, therefore, to die on the place of skulls, and, as it were, over the bones of the dead. He chose to combat with death on that spot where death had piled up his trophies, and collected every thing to render his attack poignant and frightful. On death's field of battle and conquest the Prince of Life unfolded his banners of victory; and the exclamation of the prophet was made good, Death ! I will be a poison to thee ; grave ! I will be a pestilence to thee.

But how clearly do I besides perceive, from this circumstance, the greatness of my own guilt, and the infinity of the love of Jesus ! How abominable must my iniquity be, when, by reason of it, my Jesus had to breathe his last sigh in the place appointed for the miserable end of the most flagitious criminals, under the greatest ignominy, and in the most violent agonies ! How ardent must the thanks be which I owe to my Redeemer even for this particular portion of his sufferings ! Now, let me die where I may, my death will always be a blessed death. Whether it be fated to overtake me in the hands of my enemies, or in the arms of my dearest friends, I shall in neither case have cause to despond. In what place soever I may die, the same will be to me my last stage to heaven if I yield up the ghost in union and fellowship with Jesus.

## CONTEMPLATION XXXI.

*Jesus on the Cross.*

—Where they crucified him.—JOHN, xix. 18.

THEY CRUCIFIED HIM!—these three words comprehend all that can fill the heart with terror and joy. John says to us here, in the most expressive brevity, every thing capable of exciting the strongest feelings of pity, love, and gratitude. A different writer would have employed all the aids of eloquence to represent to us the destiny of Jesus in the most affecting point of view. But for the Apostle it is sufficient only to mention the obloquy which the Redeemer was fated to endure, and to leave the rest to the reflection of the reader. Yes, my soul! here thou findest a subject with which thou mayst exercise thy whole strength, employ all thy thoughts, and satisfy all thy affections. Here, where all heaven was rapt in wonder and deep admiration, indifference and insensibility would be an unpardonable crime. Behold, with holy emotion, the most dread, terrific, and awful event that ever occurred on the earth. THEY CRUCIFIED HIM! Here, my soul! pause and ponder.

O Golgotha! what blood didst thou drink! Who is he of whom it was said, THEY CRUCIFIED HIM? Evil-doers and rebels thy soil had borne in abundance. But never yet expired on thy summit, nor on any other spot of the globe, a man of such exaltation of mind, of such innocence, and of such divine qualities. This was the only one among all those that have been executed since the flood, since the dawn of time, who

died the death of a criminal and yet knew not transgression in aught ; who was so lowly degraded, and at the same time so highly exalted above heaven and earth ; and in whom with the most inexpressible ignominy was united the glory of the godhead. He was the only one whose death was not only a type, but also a redemption for the human race. Hence the crucified form of my Saviour has for me so many charms. In the figure of Jehovah I should not be able to behold his countenance, and if I saw it, terrible to me would be the aspect. In the form of an archangel his destiny would appear to me incomprehensible ; in that of a martyr his sufferings would be a stumbling-block to me in my estimation of the divine love and justice : if he had been doomed to die as a prophet, he would have been, like most of the prophets, according to the Jewish custom, stoned to death ; but here omniscient Providence ordained that he should be the victim of a wholly different description of deadly violence, which should have no similarity with the sufferings sustained for the cause of the truth alone. He hung on the cross, and endured the death of slaves and common malefactors. In the manner of death to which my Saviour was submitted, the most sublime conclusions, in regard to the wisdom of God, are discoverable, and conduce much to the confirmation of my faith. It was necessary, therefore, even at the outset, that Jesus should die a violent death, because he could not expect a natural death as the consequence of any sin in himself ; and the hand of the Lord, either through the instrumentality of men or of some different means of extraordinary destruction, was requisite, for the extinction of the guilt of others, to shorten his days. But that, among all the possible modes of death, he

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suffered that of the cross, arose from a wise dispensation on the part of God. By no species of capital punishment could the certainty that Jesus stood under the divine judgment as a bondsman have been better demonstrated than by that of crucifixion, which was exclusively appropriated to slaves. His death by crucifixion might also, perhaps, have had this especial view, that the Saviour should die not in a compulsory, but in a voluntary manner; as he was not to die till all things, according to a certain order and premeditated gradation, were accomplished by him. Yes, since in his last hours he had still so much to do in respect to instruction and for the perfecting of his sacrifice, the time of crucifixion, a death which was slow in progress, and during which his mind, without any obscuration, could act and operate in the free use of the faculties of reason, afforded to him for this purpose the best opportunities. When he afterwards really died, it might be said that he died of himself, as no farther force was employed, and he could have lived still longer on the cross. In fine, this also belongs to the wisdom of the cross of Jesus; nor can the precious fact be too often mentioned and remembered, that through it, in addition to every thing else, all former types and prophecies were fulfilled.

How much wisdom and grace are therefore combined in Christ's death of the cross! And what great cause have I to let it be my chief boast, my most efficacious comfort, and my most exulting joy! I need only to look back to the misery into which I should have been plunged by my sins, if Jesus had not presented for me a perfect offering of atonement; and then I need only to reflect, on the other hand, upon the ineffable benefits which have been produced for me through the cross

of Jesus: this of itself would be sufficient to inspire me with the most profound veneration, and the most heartfelt esteem for his death. Do I seek for consolation under the charges of an accusing conscience, I see in Jesus, and in him crucified, the conciliator for all my iniquities. Do the chastisements which I have deserved through my transgressions make me fearful, the cross of Christ proclaims to me, that he has borne my griefs and carried my sorrows, that he has been wounded for my transgressions and bruised for my iniquities. Does the curse of the law terrify me, I can look up, in the fulness of faith, with affiance to him, who, for me, became a curse, as it were, on the cross, and thus not only freed me from the curse itself, but obtained for me the most glorious and inestimable of all blessings. In this respect the cross of Jesus is the most efficacious means of my salvation, the ground of my atonement, the source of my righteousness, of my tranquillity, of my hope and trust, of my freedom, and of my happiness here, and the cause and origin of my felicity hereafter. But how can I, amid such lofty privileges and anticipations, in which I am made a partaker by the cross of Jesus, remain so unconcerned and so void of feeling, as I am wont to do, when I contemplate the crucified Redeemer! Alas! my love is still far too cold, and my zeal in godliness far too light, when I weigh against the latter the services performed for me at such a price by my Jesus, and compare the former with the fervency of his affection towards me. Did I love the crucified Jesus from my whole soul, I should allow myself to be won by it to renounce the love of sin and the world, and to swear, with firmness and resolution, never to break my vow—everlasting fidelity to my Saviour. Were the cross of Jesus dear



to me above all things, I should not seek in transitory things my happiness and joy. Were I moved in a lively manner by the view of the crucified Jesus, I should feel in my heart the most unalterable aversion against all iniquity, and should beware of defiling my soul with new vices. Were the rescue of my immortal spirit all and all with me, I could not persevere in regarding the gratifications of the flesh as the chief good. Had the cross of Jesus greater influence over my heart, I should become, with respect to God and his worship, with respect to Christ and the imitation of his example, and with respect both to my neighbour and myself, totally otherwise minded than I have hitherto been.

All this my soul knows. And now, O my Jesus ! while I meditate in still calmness upon thy death and crucifixion, shut out from the bustle and business of the world, my insensibility and demerits, touching thy cross are exceedingly glaring to me. And, if I rightly comprehend myself, I feel in my breast the most vehement and burning desire to devote and offer myself up wholly to thee, my crucified Redeemer ! I wish, in regard to thy cross, to be so inclined as Paul was, and to be so penetrated by the sense of thy sufferings, as only to live for thee who diedst for me. But I fear, not without cause, that my fickle heart may frustrate all my good resolutions as soon as I enter again into intercourse with the world. How speedily, it is to be dreaded, will my recollection of the cross, and my love towards it vanish, when those objects shall once more present themselves to me, which occupy, in general, all my thoughts and all my affections ! Imprint, therefore, O Christ ! I beseech thee, the image of thy cross deeply in my soul, and let it ever float before my eyes when carnal lusts, and the delights of sin

and the world, allure me to do aught that might offend thee. Let the contemplation of it, through faith, strengthen me against every assault of temptation, and enable me undeviatingly to persist in my sworn fidelity. If I feel myself in this frame of mind, the cross of Jesus will be a tree of life to me bearing the most delightful fruits: I shall there discover, under all my inquietudes, that which is able fully to appease and content my heart; and especially in the hour of death I shall be able to embrace this cross to my comfort, and find, through the same, my entrance into thy heavenly kingdom.

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## CONTEMPLATION XXXII.

### *The Last Words of the Dying Jesus.*

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.—Woman, behold thy son! Behold thy mother!—Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.—My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?—I thirst.—It is finished.—Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.—MAT. xxvii. 46: LUKE, xxiii. 34. 43. 46; JOHN, xix. 26. 30.

OH! how gentle are the accents that are heard from Golgotha! Terrible was the utterance of God on Sinai, when he spoke as the lawgiver and the mighty judge in words of thunder, while the deadly lightning flashed around him. But here all is tranquil. Here I can approach without terror to the hill on which my Saviour bleeds; here I can listen without trembling to the voice of my Jesus; for my dying Redeemer pre-

sents himself in the most pleasing mien to all sinners, to all the forsaken, and to all the dying.—I will now, for the confirmation of my faith, contemplate him under this form.

I see in the person of Jesus the friend of sinners, devoted and attached to the lost and the forlorn, even to his latest breath. Was it for the sake of sinners, that as long as he wandered on the earth, he underwent all toils and sufferings? so were they also the objects of his loving solicitude, when he was at the point of submitting to the power of death. Sinners were his first and most absorbing thought. Around his cross stood a throng of hardened wretches, yet he looked upon them with eyes of the most compassionate affection, and prayed for them in these moving terms: “Father! forgive them, for they know not what they do!” At his side hung a malefactor, who with a broken contrite heart petitioned from him grace. How hastened he to cheer the woe-begone, drooping wretch! How prompt was he to vouchsafe to him the ecstatic assurance, “To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise!” For me also did Jesus, in the time of his flesh, offer up prayer and supplication with tears and loud crying. Where should I now be, if he had not included me in this intercession which he made for his murderers? Perhaps I should long ago have perished in my iniquities; perhaps despair would have seized upon me. But he sued for me, and averted the punishment which threatened to destroy me. More than once has he regarded me with pity, when I deserved his stern look of judgment; and saved my soul, when I was about to rush into perdition. And what will he not still effect for me, if I turn to him full of penitence, and with unfeigned contrition? How ready will he be to lend an assenting ear

to the last supplication of my dying lips, to my speaking tears, and to my still sighs ! I confide in thee, my Saviour ! that thou wilt then show to me that commiseration which thou didst not refuse to the culprit who took refuge in thy mercy. Thou wilt open heaven to me, when the world is shut against me ; thou wilt let me experience favour, even when thy anger is in my bones.

Jesus shows himself even on the very cross to be the support of the desolate. Truly he himself was, in the fullest sense of the expression, a man forsaken by his friends, and left unpitied by his foes to the most poignant wants of nature ; and what was yet far more terrible, abandoned, as he so affectingly complained, even by God himself. Yet even while on the cross, feeling the terrors of the wrath of the Almighty, he took part in the griefs of the destitute, whose fate was in a high degree more supportable than his own. He saw his mother—he saw how she embraced his cross and his bleeding feet, and how, with wringing hands and unceasing sighs, she leaned on the shoulder of John, and was in danger every moment of sinking under the vast load of her parental sorrows. He saw her, and made provision for her. Now his heart was lightened, and prepared beforehand for the dreadful destiny which still impended over him, of being forsaken by God !—I shall likewise once experience a crisis, in some measure, similar to this. When I shall be near to death, my soul will have to struggle also with many doubts. Perhaps I shall then too feel cause to bewail and cry out, “ My God has forsaken me ; the Lord has forgotten me ! ” Oh ! then, in that dismal moment, my Saviour ! I will look up to thee full of hope ; and derive comfort for my downcast heart, from the assur-

ance that thou wast forsaken by thy God in my stead. How relieved and easy will my heart become, if I but faithfully seek thee, thou aid of the desolate in their need? Yes truly, in every respect will my heart be relieved and set at ease. For should even the beloved of my bosom stand around my death-bed, and at the sight of them the thought disquiet me, that I leave them behind me wounded by poignant grief, or bereft of worldly means, yet I shall be able to commit them with full confidence to thy supplying grace and superintendence:—thou wilt send a John to take care of them.

How adorable art thou to my soul, O my Saviour! when I regard thee as my example, and, at the same time, my refuge and resource in death!—Thou criedst, “I thirst!” Ah! how pantedst thou, suspended in the air, pierced through, and fastened to that horrid instrument of torture by the sharp-pointed nails; and yet no one brought assuagement to thy languid weary spirit, or refreshment to thy fainting wounded body! Me also, at some future day, will a consuming drought torment, when all my vigour shall be dried up like a potsherd. Then will I call thee to mind, and at every cup of water that is handed to me, thank thee that thou grantest to me more solace on my sick couch than was administered to thee on the cross.—Thou exclaimedst, “It is finished!”—Would only that I may be enabled, at the close of my life, to speak these words after thee with the same triumph with which thou didst utter them at thy death! Oh! how joyfully may I quit the world, if I am convinced that I have finished all that was destined for me to perform and to endure. Then it will also be in my power to say, in regard to my afflictions, that they are eternally completed, and that no pang shall ever more affect either

my body or my soul.—Finally, thy end appears. With what confiding tranquillity dost thou yield up thy spirit into the hands of thy Father ! Teach me, O most cherished Jesus ! the lesson how to die as serenely as thou diedst, instruct me still more how to live as righteously as thou livedst !

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### CONTEMPLATION XXXIII.

#### *The Intercession of Jesus for his Enemies.*

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.—LUKE, xxiii. 34.

IN what greatness of mind and heart does the crucified Redeemer here appear ! Though I had even no stronger proof of the divinity of his person, and of the infinite efficacy of his sufferings, this one circumstance would be able to convince me that the sufferer must be a being exalted above all mortals. True it is, that if at the moment when his enemies were preparing to fasten him to the cross, he had dashed them to pieces with a thunder-bolt, prostrated them inanimate on the ground, or by any other supernatural means, of which so many were within his power, rendered them incapable of completing their sanguinary purpose, I should likewise have learned to acknowledge the eminence of the condemned. Then, however, I should only have regarded him as a worker of miracles, and the possessor of extraordinary dominion and authority ; but not as the friend of man, and the cherisher even of his foes : I should have admired him indeed, and looked

upon him with wonder, but not necessarily have loved him. The attributes of his spirit would then, in fact, have been more adapted to terrify, than to excite veneration or esteem. I know that, by a single word of his omnipotence, he could have laid low his adversaries for ever; that he could have ordered out all the elements against them; or that he could have escaped, had it pleased him, through invisible agency, out of their cruel fangs. But his love for the whole mortal race triumphed again here over all the weakness of human nature. Not gall and hatred, but forgiveness and gentleness, fill his bosom. He speaks not the language of anger, but that of kindness, by which he had so often already soothed disconsolate hearts. That indescribable charity and love, which impelled him to suffer death for sinners, induces him now also to pray for them. And what a tender, pressing solicitation it is! Could he have possibly prayed for his foes more urgently, or could he have acted more mildly even towards his favourites, in respect to trivial offences, than he here does towards his murderers? "Father"—such are his words—"forgive them, for they know not what they do."

First of all, in this supplication of the crucified Jesus, the tender confidence affects me with which he addresses God. How diversified and terrible soever the sufferings were which the Lord had appointed to him, yet he remained unalterably obedient even to death; and proved, by all his words and actions, that he did the will of his Father with joyfulness. Now was it particularly necessary that he should exhibit an open and public testimonial of his continued and unabating love towards his heavenly Parent, and this he does in the form of the intercession which he thus

makes for his implacable persecutors, enemies, and tormentors. HIM, who was chastising the agonised Redeemer in his official characteristic anger as the strict judge, and by whom he seemed to be forsaken—HIM the filial Jesus still calls Father ! This might serve as the surest demonstration to his opponents, that, with obedient submission to the will of his Father, he felt himself fully assured of the love and favour of the latter. Here they might perceive, that terrible as the depth of misery was into which Jesus had been plunged, yet he had the right to consider himself as the Son of the infinitely exalted God, and to hold himself certain of all support.—Happy that I am ! how easily may I now tranquillize my mind under all the troubles that can come upon me ! If now the world spurns me away, and leads me with the most painful contempt, I know a retreat, of which no mortal can deprive me. I know that the Lord of heaven and earth is my Father, to whom I may approach and flee for refuge with infallible trust and reliance, and with all the transports of unmixed confident joy. But why am I, notwithstanding, so unbelieving, and even in the slightest perplexities so dismayed ? Did Jesus show himself to be secure of the love of his Father amid the most acute of all pangs, and the most afflicting of all distresses, why should I despair whenever any trifling, perhaps wholly unimportant, accident disquiets me. For truly were every kind of misfortune to assail me at once, what would they be to the sufferings of Jesus ? His example must shame me, when my flesh would lead me into impatience and irreligious incredulity. His meritorious obedience must supply me with strength even then to continue true to my eternal Father, when his hand punishes me, agreeably to his unerring will,



apparently in the most rigorous manner. The longer I contemplate my crucified Redeemer, the more clearly I perceive my own deficiencies. I see how he directs his first thoughts on the cross to his enemies, and how benevolently solicitous he is for their salvation. It would have been only consistent with the natural character of man, if, under the violence of his own agonies, he had forgotten every thing beyond himself, and least of all thought with benignity of the savage instruments of his excruciating pains: and if he had thought of them, surely it would have been no wonder had he recollected them only with the bitterest anger. But what magnanimous, disinterested love does he not, on the contrary, evince towards these unjust and most vindictive foes! He forgets his own misery, and remembers the misery and the state of perdition of his adversaries, his persecutors, his murderers. Not his own torments appear to him to be insupportable, but that pain is insufferable to him which he sees awaiting his torturers. Neither the wounds of his body, nor his abject ignominy, affect him so forcibly as the criminality which his enemies were drawing upon themselves through his execution: and therefore does he pray so supplicatingly to his Father; "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM!"—What should I have done under similar circumstances? Or rather—as it is not possible that I could ever know sensations, in any measure, equivalent to those which my Saviour felt—what should I do, were I either mentally or corporally compelled to endure anguish to a considerable extent, of which men in enmity with me were the authors? Should I then be able to imitate my Saviour, and to think of my oppressors with affectionate solicitude, or even with impartiality? Should I not deem myself justified in

occupying my mind with my own sufferings exclusively? Should I not believe that I was deserving of indulgence, if, in the heat of my distress, I desired from my heart the ruin of all whom I had to regard as the authors of my afflictions? Yet what need have I to suppose this extreme case? Ah! I feel how my blood boils, how all my passions are stirred up into commotion, how my heart is torn by internal rackings of revenge and rage, when only small and insignificant wrongs are put upon me by my opponents! I experience daily how difficult it is for me to vanquish the fretful intemperance of my disposition, and to accustom my heart to placidity and softness towards my gain-sayers! I feel how dear vengeance is to my soul!

Oh! may I hereafter, on every effervescence of my veins, at each rancorous idea that arises in my breast, remember thee, crucified lover of mankind! Oh! to this end may I always think thus within myself; my Saviour was the only-begotten Son of the Most High, and I am dust formed out of dust; he was very God of very God, and I am a creeping worm; he was the most Holy, and I am a sinner; he suffered, although perfectly innocent, and I have merited far more than I endure; they whom he pardoned were murderers and monsters, and my enemies have still human feelings: why then should I not be willing to forgive their small offences, when Jesus was so ready to let incalculable injuries pass unpunished? Now will I place my Jesus before me as a model, on all occasions, in which my heart may be in any way exposed to the hazard of allowing itself to be overcome by passion and malevolence: I will not, however, only call him to mind, but also urgently implore him to imbue me with some small portion of his amiable temper, and to absolve me

too from my numerous sins, and my abounding wickedness. And I can be so much the more certain of the acceptance of my petition, as my Jesus, in that intercession which he made for his enemies, comprehended me likewise. He prayed, as the universal high priest, for the united sins of the entire human race, the whole of which, in a nearer or more distant degree, participated in his death-act. He prayed for all misanthropes and haters of their brethren, for all the revengeful, for all murderers and assassins,—and praise be to God that I can add, he prayed for me with them! That I still live, that I have not been snatched away by the divine wrath, that the vengeance of the Judge followed not each vindictive purpose of my mind, that I can still, at this moment, beg and receive grace; all this Jesus has obtained for me, through his loving and most blessed intercession!

Ah! cease not, everlasting High Priest! cease not to pray for me, and to work my amendment; perhaps only a few hours are still reckoned out to me, and the day of vengeance will rise over me. Pray for me, my Saviour! pray for me; implore for me yet a respite of grace, and let me not fall in my iniquities. When I persist in despising thy mercy, which guides me to penitence; when I heap up the mountain of my sins with new and greater transgressions; when I proceed in the hardening of my heart; when I, at last, stand on the brink of the grave, and languish after help; ah! then pray for me, perfected High Priest! and let me find pity and compassion from thee, for the sake of thy meritorious intercession on the cross!

## CONTEMPLATION XXXIV.

*The Filial Tenderness of the Dying Jesus towards his Mother.*

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son ! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother ! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.—JOHN, xix. 25, 26, 27.

Love is stronger than death, and is a flame of the Deity which even a deluge of sorrows and troubles cannot extinguish. This conclusion I can easily infer from the moving history over which I am now about to meditate, in this my silent retirement for serious thought.

It is exceedingly astonishing, that, among so many people as Jesus had loaded with benefits, there was only one man found who was not ashamed of his cross. The great crowd followed the party that enjoyed prosperity and power : a very few only were so generous as to declare themselves in favour of oppressed innocence. What a multitude ran after Jesus when he feasted them or allured them by his miracles ! but now, at the hour of his death, of all his friends there remained but three women and one disciple near him. This is indisputably another occasion of astonishment. Who would have supposed that the weaker creature should be the more courageous ? Feeble females conquer the inborn timidity of their sex ; they vanquish all the sensations of natural horror excited by so dread-

ful a spectacle, all innate timidity, and all the shame and scandal attached to the open profession of regard for a person crucified between two notorious malefactors; finally, they subdue all sense of the danger in which the rage of the furious mob might place them. And what procured for them so extraordinary and so complete a triumph over themselves? Nothing else than the most ardent and the truest love towards Jesus, the admiration of his great patience, and the warmest desire to be taught by his example and to collect his last admonitions.

Among these individuals there is, however, one who especially claims my attention—Mary at the cross of Jesus! What a heart-rending sight must it have been for the fond and faithful mother, when she saw that her son, who was all innocence and virtue, was so degradingly vilified, and, like a criminal malefactor, an object of detestation and horror, nailed to the infamous tree, while she herself could only stand and look on, an afflicted spectatress, unable to promote his rescue or to contribute to his alleviation! When she beheld him bleeding and wounded, and yet could neither bind up his wounds nor stanch his blood; when she perceived him to be already on the point of death, without having the power to close his darkened eyes, what agony must not the holy heart of the mother of Jesus have felt!

Of all this unhappy group, however, the crucified himself ought to attract my fullest observation. His anguish at the view of these mourning friends is stronger than theirs, in proportion as the love which he bears to them exceeds their affection towards him. They have only one grief to sustain; but he has, at the same moment, to struggle with a thousand woes. And yet

how unutterably great is his unshaken love ! He sympathises with his sorrowing friends, and seems to lose, in his efforts to comfort them, all sense of his own calamities. It is not by mere chance that he perceives his mother : he seeks her with his looks, he discovers her in the throng of the people. He gives her to understand, that he observes her faithfulness, that he is affected by it, and will repay compassion with compassion. But his filial inclination testifies to her more than pity, for he had already taken thought for her welfare, and delivers her over to the care of a disciple, who, from love to his master, is ready to submit to every inconvenience with joy, far more to receive into his charge so precious a pledge.

Here I perceive in Jesus the great advantages which, even in the imminent certainty of death, a virtuous life promises to us. When the dying, in general, at the view of their near decease, are lost in tribulation and confusion of mind ; when they are scarcely able to think of themselves, far less to trouble their thoughts about others, although even their nearest kindred ; when the expiring, who have spent their entire existence in worldly affairs and distractions, find no time to employ in aught save the preparation for their impending end ; the christian, who has devoted a portion of his healthful days to the needful task of getting ready for his inevitable departure, is able to dedicate a part of his last hours to his children, his family, and his friends. He can settle his earthly concerns ; he can impart good advice to the dismayed partners of his affection ; he can remain always resolute, always master over himself ; he can justly regulate and divide, before his removal, the estate which he is about to leave behind him ; can make due arrangement for his house-

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hold ; determine the future education of his offspring, and express to them his latest wishes ; and then bidding them, and all about him, with efficacious blessings, the last farewell, pass with tranquil happiness, an edifying and cheering pattern of religious fortitude, into the eternal dwellings of the saints. Thus can the christian act, even in that anxious interval of time, when the very strongest are, otherwise, wont to be weak, as they tear themselves away from the adored of their souls ; and when, from previous foresight, they ought to be no longer timorously solicitous about their future fate, are yet filled with the most distracting terrors. How calm can the pious man remain even when he leaves behind him those who lose in him a parent, a protector, and a friend ! I can well indeed imagine, that it must be no small pain for the dying to behold assembled around their death-bed those whose tears alone already declare their idea of the immensity of the loss which they see that they are going to sustain. But I also believe, that a confiding reliance on the Lord, who has made heaven and earth, and who is the helper of all the forlorn and deserted, can very easily restore peace to the troubled heart, and so chase away the clouds of doubt and sorrow, that the sun of life shall set in serenity.

This is for me an important doctrine, and an inexpressible consolation. I shall be one day similar, in part, to my Saviour in this also, that, on my approaching release from the world, I shall behold those around me, who made my terrestrial residence so pleasing. It will, perhaps, be a wife that shall weep for the flight of my spirit. Perhaps it will be the children of my love, perhaps brothers and sisters of a common parent, perhaps not less affectionate relatives in a dif-

ferent affinity, or, perhaps, tried and chosen friends, who, at that sorrowful hour, will assemble round my couch. And I see beforehand, I confess, what a struggle will then take place in my soul. But, in that hour of trial, let thy example, crucified Jesus ! beam before my eyes : so tenderly, as thou didst upon thy favoured ones, will I gaze upon these ; be earnestly careful, to the utmost of my power, for their well being ; and, in regard to the rest, resign them with cheerfulness to thy protection.

I discover in this event one circumstance more which I can yet apply to my instruction. Mary was at the cross of Jesus, but she continued standing there erect. Her anguish and pain are easily to be supposed ; but she did not permit herself to be overpowered by them. She was not heard to murmur any complaint against God, or to utter angry reproaches against the murderers of her Son. She knew too well the submission with which mortals ought ever to walk, in the ways of Providence. She knew that the death of her Son would conduce to the dearest weal of the world. I will follow her model. Who knows but that those will yet die in my presence who are now my support, my joy, and my comfort ? However hard to me this appointment may prove, I will, nevertheless, receive it with submissive respect, and say, It is the Lord's doing : let him do that which seems good to him. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord ! Inspired with such sentiments, I shall find, in my Saviour, the surest and most efficient consolation. He will look upon me, as upon his mother, with pity, and tranquillize my agitated soul through his never-failing help.



## CONTEMPLATION XXXV.

*Jesus Mocked as He Hung on the Cross.*

And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyedst the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusted in God: let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.—MATT. xxvii. 39—44.

SELDOM are malice and outrage carried to such a pitch as to be exercised upon those who are about to close their life, however just be their fate, in torment and ignominy. At such a dreadful moment, even the most inveterate enemies are silent, and their passions give place to I know not what horror, which overpowers their whole soul. Usually a melancholy stillness diffuses itself on these sad occasions among the assembled multitude, rendering most obviously perceptible those innate feelings of humanity which, under such circumstances, control even the hardest hearts. And, if he who meets the punishment of death be presumably innocent, the pity excited for such an unfortunate being is, of necessity, increased. With what detestation must I therefore regard the conduct of the Jews, who proceeded so far in their frantic rage, that even at the very time when they saw their blood-thirsty purposes against Jesus accomplished, they ceased not to abuse him with derision and taunts! Nothing could

touch the steeled bosoms of these cruel persecutors ; not the view of a guiltless person, who, by his exceeding benevolence, had rendered himself an object deserving of the esteem of the whole nation ; not the spectacle of his torments, which in painfulness and obloquy surpassed the lot of all malefactors, whether prior or subsequent ; not the looks of woe of that small number of his friends, the scanty remnant of all his followers, who stood trembling victims of the most corroding and bitter sorrow beneath his cross ; not the contemplation of that most wonderful magnanimity of conduct which he manifested under his direst pangs. All this was so far from making an impression upon the adamantine hearts of the degenerate Israelites, that they were only solicitous to devise by what means they might render his sufferings severe beyond all possible endurance. And this barbarous aim they fancied that they might attain, if they not only wounded his body with the harshest tortures, but his mind also by the most cutting mockery and reproach.

From this behaviour of the enemies of Jesus, I can easily infer how frightful the power of the passions is, and how it occurs that the excesses of men run often almost into infinitude. When I have once been hurried into ruling sins, it is no longer at my option to stop at the point where I happened, perhaps, to become aware of the wretched results to which my vices were hastening me. The prevailing habit of sinning which I have acquired will render me at length indifferent to all representations, and to all the misery to come, which arises from iniquity. I shall allow myself to be borne down in the stream of evil ; and, ere I can help it, I shall be swallowed up in the abyss which I sought too late to avoid.

Ah ! I must endeavour, with all precaution, to escape from the first incentives to sin, and never blindly abandon myself to a temptation which may, at the beginning, perhaps, flatter my propensities, but will, in the end, bring down upon me the most grievous affliction.

The vice of scorning and reviling the unfortunate and afflicted presents itself to me here in its full deformity. It is always an act of excessive cruelty to taunt and deride such as are combating with sorrow and pain, even supposing that their misery is, in part, the natural consequence of their own follies. But to make a sport and ridicule of innocent sufferers is a crime against which every civilized and manly sentiment must start up in indignation.

There is no doubt but that this ruthless treatment must have occasioned to our Saviour the deepest anguish, and the more so as all the accusations and complaints which were applied to him, were equally insignificant and groundless, and therefore only added to the flagitiousness of his revilers, whom his comprehensive love could neither totally reject, nor cease to bewail for their stubborn infatuation. But this very frivolousness of the reproaches raised against him is the surest proof of the blameless innocence of Jesus. If the Jews had known any thing of importance which they could have laid to his charge, they would not have permitted it to remain dormant. Their whole accusation regards a title which Christ had ascribed to himself, and which, with full right, belonged to him, but in the question and examination of which Caiaphas had not acted ingenuously and impartially. What a strong evidence of the actual irreproachableness of Jesus lies in this weakness of the imputations of his foes ! How void of blemish and how guileless must the whole tenor of his

life have been, since his worst enemies found themselves compelled, in order to gloss over their hatred, to invent the most palpable and extravagant slanders against him, being utterly unable to attain him with any real offence ! Hence also Jesus endured all the mockery of the crowd with such silence and composure ; for being acquitted by his own heart, he was enabled to continue tranquil under every harsh and uncharitable judgment. He patiently submitted to all affronts and mortifications ; he even bore them for us with pleasure, that he might work out our eternal redemption. Nothing could have been more easy for him than to have imposed silence upon his scoffers. With a single word, spoken from his cross, he could have struck the madmen dumb and motionless at his feet. But he did not this ; he opposed nought to their tumultuous cries, save his divine meekness : he returned their impetuous ferocity only by ardent and gracious intercession in their behalf. Ought not this example to affect me to the very soul ? Should I not hence learn how my deportment ought to be shaped even towards those who have injured me the most cruelly ? Presuming actually that the wrong done to me were such as to rouse heaven and earth to witness against it, and that it were never to be repaired, still can I deny that the outrages committed upon Jesus, and which, for my sake too, he endured, were infinitely more shocking than aught that could occur to me ? And am I then unwilling to grant forgiveness ? Shall I refuse to become reconciled with my brother, with my friend, with my kinsman, that entreats me, that supplicates me, as if on his knees, that seeks the renewal of my esteem, that prays for the oblivion of our past strife, and tries all means to soften my resentment ? Shall I not imitate

the mildness, the forbearance of the Lord, whose disciple I desire to be accounted? Would I make claim to a share in the love of my Redeemer, while I approach him with a heart which is full of anger, malignity, and revenge? Ah! I will haste and bring this hard implacable heart to thy cross, everlasting High Priest! From thee I will learn not to revile again when I am reviled, nor to threaten when I suffer, but to leave my cause to him who judges all righteously. I will, however, at the same time, never do any thing through which I may attract the mockery and the merited contempt of my enemies. And should I then, contrary to my deserts, be held in scorn, I will look upon thee, unoffending Jesus, and follow thy pattern. It shall not surprise me, if I am compelled to endure the scorn and calumny of the ungodly. If the defamatory, mocking spirit of the age fell upon thee, thou most Holy! how can I wonder at the evil and slanderous reports which are circulated concerning me, whose weaknesses are but too obnoxious to severe and revolting treatment? If thou too, amid so many afflictions, hadst to exercise thyself in self-denial and in self-command, how necessary are disappointments and humiliations to me, as uninterrupted success and approbation would but tend to seduce me into sin?

I here see in Jesus what he could have done if he had chosen to employ the power that dwelt in him, and which his foes, with such insolent defiance, challenged him to show. It depended solely on his own will to have manifested himself at once as the undeniable Son of God, and by descending from the cross, to have put the malevolence of all his adversaries instantly to shame and silence. But such was not the step he took: Verily, because he was the Son of God he would not come

down ; for he chose to be obedient, even to the death of the cross, to effect the ransom of mankind. Oh ! would that I were only of the disposition of Jesus ! If I had always the power to exercise upon my foes the vengeance which my heart suggests, I should be ready to spread misery and destruction everywhere around me ; I should avail myself of all the means in my power to escape from the might or the atrocity of my opponents, nor deem the retribution with which I strove to vex them in turn, to be at all less justifiable than the use of a due right. But how little should I, in this case, resemble my Redeemer, in whom almighty power was united with ineffable love ! Let it, then, constantly continue my endeavour, through meekness, kindness, and affection towards my fellow-men, to approach always more closely to the model which he has left for me to observe. I must make it my honour and triumph to overcome my enemies by forbearance and patience.

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### CONTEMPLATION XXXVI.

#### *The Conversion of the Thief on the Cross.*

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom.—LUKE, xxiii. 42.

HERE my Redeemer found, under the great-ennervation which pervaded all his limbs, a comfort that invigorated his heart. The ignominy which he experienced from the impious and insulting band of his enemies was to a great degree rewarded by a sinner's acknowledging him for the Saviour of the world. It

had been his joy, throughout the whole course of his life, to see sinners seeking him, and asking his assistance in their need. This sweetened all his hardships, all his calamities and reproaches, all his journeys, and all his nocturnal watchings. And now, when his oppressors were too cruel to grant him the slightest solace in his expiring agonies, he found in this malefactor, who penitently turned to him, a comfort which strengthened him more than any corporeal refreshment could have done. And only he, who, during his entire existence, had made it his chief business to search for sinners and render them blessed; he, to whom a contrite sinner was dearer than a conquered kingdom; he, who esteemed it the most exquisite of all qualifications if he could quicken a sinner's heart—he only was capable of thus receiving assuagement under such torment.

The wretched criminal that hung at the side of his crucified Lord evinced a heart glowing with the purest desire of obtaining salvation. He saw that there was now nothing more for him to hope in this world, and hence he sought to obtain a portion in that to come. But his former misdeeds seemed to him to close the very entrance into it against him. He looked back, therefore, with the most poignant remorse upon his past existence, and was now only solicitous to end his life, the beginning and progress of which had been so culpable, in a state of sanctity. In this most violent contest of his soul he made application to Jesus, who, according to external condition, was perfectly similar to himself, but from whom he could, notwithstanding, promise himself every thing. Full of reverence and affiance, he entreated the Son of God to remember him when he should come into his kingdom. Who can help

being astonished at this man's faith? He would have deserved lenity if, from the want of better knowledge, he had now been scandalized at the miserable circumstances of the incarnate Deity, to all outward appearance a mere deserted man. It would not have been strange, if the scoffs and defamations which he had overheard from the enemies of Christ had stifled every better feeling in his breast, or rendered him at least indifferent to the person of the Redeemer. It was not to have been expected from an individual who had lived so viciously, and who, as his mode of life would lead us to conclude, had obstinately suppressed every impulse of pity, that he should testify so much candid sympathy and greatness of mind as to advocate the cause of Jesus against the slanders of his foes, and assert and vindicate his innocence so triumphantly. But in this, especially, his conduct is worthy of our greatest admiration, that he manifested so strong a reliance in Jesus, that he anticipated from his mercy a benefaction which presupposed the reality and conviction of the divinity of his sacred Fellow-sufferer; and that he implored from the Saviour a participation in his kingdom. Judging from external appearance, no one seemed less able to bestow favours than Jesus, who, so far from exhibiting the majesty of royalty, displayed the weakness and fragility of humanity in its most degraded state.

Jesus was now sunk into the lowest depth of misery. He possessed nothing at all in this world. He was stretched out naked on the cross, and had neither adherents nor attendants. He was near to death, which with kings and princes is the epoch when all their grandeur, elevation, and distinction vanish, and when even none among their courtiers any longer crave their



favour. Yet it was in this woful and discouraging condition, that the thief implored a boon from Christ, extending beyond the limits of temporal duration. He begged that the Redeemer would remember him when he came into his kingdom.—A greater degree of faith than this could hardly have been exhibited.

I will not now enter into an investigation, whether such an efficacious faith in Christ is to be found in me. I will go farther back in my immediate topic of meditation, and reflect upon the sentiments and frame of mind of this most memorable converted convict. I have, too, the more reason also to do this, as death may as suddenly overtake me as it did the thief. The latter was even able to foresee, with some measure of certainty, that he had yet a few hours to linger on the cross, and the nearer that death approached to him, the more earnestly could he dispose himself for its reception. I, however, cannot do this. I am not capable of determining, with the smallest certainty, how close to me, or how far from me, my death may at any time be. As little can I promise to myself in my last hours the use of my mental faculties, which is, however, absolutely necessary for a real conversion. Whether I die suddenly or gradually, I am in both cases in danger with regard to my soul. If I die unexpectedly, I shall by no means be able to take due care of my conversion. But should I, as, on account of my worldly circumstances, I have reason to desire, be removed from this life by a gradual decay on my sick-bed, I can clearly perceive, beforehand, that a thousand incidents may arise, which will render my most serious resolutions of penitence, if not impracticable, at least exceedingly difficult. How needful is it, therefore, that

I should now, while I am still in health, while I still live, undertake without delay that business which, at my death, I shall wish that I had completed ; and that I should now endeavour to establish myself in that frame of mind in which the repentant malefactor was enabled so happily to meet his violent death. This man displayed the most unfeigned abhorrence for sin, and a longing desire not only to save his own soul, but also the souls of those who were in a similar state of guilt with himself. He endured in quiet composure the pangs of his execution, which he considered to be the unavoidable results of his misdeeds. He took refuge in the grace of Jesus, from whom he confidently implored pardon and salvation. And these are the sentiments with which my soul also must be replenished if I would die the death of the righteous.

I must be impressed with the most lively detestation of my transgressions, and acknowledge the justness of the wrath to which I have exposed myself through them. Though my conscience may not reproach me with such enormities as those whose remembrance must so deeply have wounded the heart of the awakened thief, I shall still find, in reviewing my past life, offences enough, not indeed thus terrible and hateful, according to the sentence of the world, yet, in the eyes of God, most worthy of condemnation. In order to fall into despair, I need not previously have stained my hands with human blood, and augmented my fortune with the plunder of the murdered ; I need not have committed any of those flagrant misdemeanours that incur the punishment of society. Every sin of which I have been guilty may, when I am verging towards death, sting me with remorse, and drive me into the agonies of despondency ; for when I find my-

self on the edge of the grave, I shall decide quite otherwise respecting my trespasses than I do in the season of health. What seems to me now only as a grain of sand will appear to me then as a mountain rearing its head above the clouds, as if to give testimony against me in heaven. What I now regard as a trifle, I shall then shudder to think of, as a matter of the heaviest import. And, oh ! may I even then, when all my felicity for unbounded ages will depend upon this illumination of my understanding, may I even then only perceive the entire abomination of my crimes and errors !

And when thus the lively consciousness of my sins terrifies me, when the anguish of my soul increases, and my straitened heart knows no relief, oh ! then thy meritorious death, my Jesus ! must prove my sanctuary, and the trust and comfort of my soul. Think of me, gracious Jesus ! when I wrestle with my sins, and let me not be subdued. Think of me, when the remembrance of the levities of my youth, and of the worse acts of my riper years, make my heart afraid, so that I may not be wholly bereft of hope. Think of me in those hours of sorrow, when no one on earth thinks of me, or when the mindfulness of my friends can afford me no alleviation, in order that I may be able to combat against all trials and temptations. Think of me in my death-agonies, and abide by me with thy grace, that I may find the portals of heaven unfolded for my entry, when the earth can no longer afford to me a dwelling-place on its surface. Remember all the desolate, all suffering, and all dying persons, for their respective good. Of these children of calamity there are many at this present moment who seek thee with all their heart. Mercifully encourage and alleviate them, and let them, for thy redemption's sake, find their home in thy Father's mansion.

## CONTEMPLATION XXXVII.

*The Graciousness of Jesus towards the Penitent Thief.*

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.—LUKE, xxiii. 43.

By this answer I again recognise Jesus in his divine majesty, which even the deepest debasement could not wholly efface. I see before me meanness and elevation, poverty and riches, united in a most mysterious manner in one and the same suffering person. What no king can do, when death strips him of his earthly dignity, the crucified Jesus does here: he promises to the penitent thief a portion in his kingdom, and in the glory which he expected on the day of his decease. Did it lately prove a stumbling-block to my weak reason, when I heard Jesus abused by senseless slanders and vulgar taunts? now is this objection entirely taken away, since I behold him at present in a state of potency and greatness, which no mockery nor defamation can in the slightest degree abridge. Truly, Jesus the crucified is the Son of God. His is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever!

And how consolatory is it for my faith that this King is the friend of sinners. The evidences of his divine exaltation would be far from proving so satisfactory as they are, if he had not displayed them for the good of transgressors. If I merely knew that his kingdom and his glory are of eternal duration, this knowledge could not be so very ravishing to me; to render it thus, I must first have learned, that I also have a part in his kingdom and in his glory. If I

only beheld in the persecuted Jesus the Son of God, this would, indeed, strike me with admiration, but it would, at the same time, awe me from approaching to him. But—sweet, encouraging idea!—Christ, the Son of God, is the friend of sinners, and he is my God, my King, my Saviour, and my Sanctifier! And this conviction it was that gave peace to the heart of the dying malefactor. In the extreme tribulation of his soul, in the near approach of his last moments, nothing could more strongly invigorate him, nothing inspire him with more joy, than the love with which Jesus gave ear to him and accepted him. He had disclosed to the Redeemer all the anguish of his soul, and Christ was ready to release him from it, nay to promise him more than he had ventured to solicit. The delinquent begged Jesus to remember him when he should come into his kingdom. He could easily conjecture, that his torment on the cross would not continue for a long time: he only desired, therefore, that, when his death ensued, he might find some measure of grace, and not be quite lost. But Jesus imparted to him far more than he could either have imagined or craved. To-day, said the great Benefactor, shalt thou be with me in paradise!

How amazed I am at Jesus' love for sinners! Even during the time of his crucifixion, under the most horrible pangs, in the vilest degradation, sinners remain his dearest concern. As, throughout his life, it was his daily occupation to search for sinners, and to render them blessed, so is it also now, in the hour of his death, his gratification to rescue lost souls from perdition, to convert the profligate and abandoned. I conceive to myself what joy his tortured heart must have felt, when he saw his last efforts on the earth for

the rescue and felicity of sinners so victoriously crowned with success ! He had often, while a wanderer in the world, endeavoured, through his doctrines and his blessings, to draw sinners to him without effect ; and now, at the extreme close of his terrestrial existence, he had the happiness to win the affections of one of the greatest of transgressors. This was the first conquest of the cross, the first result of the intercessory petition which Jesus had made for his foes, and the noblest booty which he himself carried away from death's scene of contest.

Oh ! that I, too, through my reformation, might yet cause to my Redeemer as much joy as I have already occasioned him sorrow through my continued obduracy and impenitence ! How long has he looked towards me in my errors, how often sought to save me, and how ardently desired my amendment ! To what a number of external circumstances and events has he given rise in order to awake me out of my lethargy of sin ! Every season, every place, every occurrence, was ordered and employed by his tender care to bring me to him. So many examples as he has exhibited to me both of rejected and grace-admitted sinners ; so many disasters, and special gifts, and deliverances as he has sent to myself individually, might surely convince me of his inclination to seek out sinners to the last, to sue for their confidence and love, and to make them happy without bounds ! And what does he not do for me at this moment ? The opportunity which he affords to me of contemplating his sufferings ; the instance which is placed before me of a pardoned worker in iniquity ;—are not these powerful admonitions to my heart to flee from the paths of vice, and cleave to him

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who is able and willing to save? No, thou only **Help** of sinners! I will not allow thy exertions to be fruitless with respect to me. I see how thou stretchest out thy arms to me, and I hasten towards thee. I will gladly permit myself to be laid hold of by thy benignant hand. Without farther postponement, I will now be solicitous for the safety of my soul. So favourable a moment as the present will not, perhaps, return: conversion will not be so easy to me in the process of time as it now is. I shall grow every day more perverse, more habituated to sin, and therefore more hardened. I will hence avail myself of the passing instant, and employ it in meditating important things, and in making those essential preparations from which I may anticipate a happy termination to my mortal career.

The sooner I apply myself to the work of salvation the more cheerfully shall I meet death, and the more certain shall I be of participating in eternal bliss. If this important task be early commenced and vigorously prosecuted, then, indeed, I may expect heaven with confidence as my reward, and breathe out my last in the soothing persuasion that, on the day of my death, I shall arrive in paradise. That last moment, which here separates my soul from my body, will then be my first in glory. Let the earthly part of me moulder into dust, the better part will be exalted above the grave and corruption. Be my knowledge of the condition of the soul after corporeal extinction, and of the nature of the world to come, ever so obscure and imperfect; it is enough that I am convinced that it will go well with my own immortal spirit; enough that I can rest assured, that the place to which I shall be removed will be an infinitely more agreeable, and an in-

finitely happier residence for me than that in which I now sojourn. Yes, I know this, and will await my final summons without apprehension. Yea! how I long to depart and be with Christ!

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### CONTEMPLATION XXXVIII.

#### *Jesus' Lamentation on the Cross.*

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?—MATT. xxvii. 46.

THIS lamentation from the lips of the Son of God has that in it which must rouse every feeling of wonder and astonishment. Yet so much the more reason have we to ponder upon it, to take it to heart, and to turn it to the promotion of our own faith and godliness. This circumstance may also convince us, that the death of Jesus was not the death of a merely innocent sufferer, of a patriot, or of a martyr. Such persons have always exhibited in their last troubles an invincible intrepidity. No complaint was ever heard to issue from their mouths. They rather prized themselves happy to endure for Jesus' sake. Amidst the sharpest pains, and the utmost exhaustion of strength, they were tranquil and contented; and without once bewailing the cruelty of their destiny, sustained, with astonishing quietness of spirit, every torture that was inflicted upon them. Instead of weeping and breaking out into exclamations of sorrow and distress, they went with a sort of triumph to the completion of their fate.



Yet how is this? These victims to their country's cause and to religion, who were only men, and, with all their merit and clearness from heavy guilt, still sinners, could bid defiance to death, could despise the most dreadful bodily afflictions, could mount the fiery pile with exaltation, and sing hymns of praise in the midst of consuming flames! And Jesus, the magnified Son of God, the immaculate, who had far more reason than they to condemn death, to which, indeed, he only submitted because such was his own free-will—Jesus Christ displays less fortitude than the martyrs! He cries out in the anguish of his soul, My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me? What an ejaculation for the incarnate God, who should have hailed his departing hour with joy! Whence arises this seeming contradiction?—The death of this divine victim was an offering for the sins of the world: it was accompanied with a bitterness of which no dying mortal, no martyr since the creation, ever tasted in so full a measure. In this moment he suffered all that, as a sacrifice for our iniquities, he was doomed to bear. This is the explanation of the lamentation of Jesus, which, without this solution, would remain an unintelligible riddle.

But how deep an impression ought this voice of the expiring Jesus to make upon my heart! Can I refuse to him the fondest pity of which my bosom is capable? Yet I should pay this claim of duty even to any individual whom I saw dying a death of innocence. I should, without doubt, be deeply affected, were I to behold a virtuous fellow-creature a prey to the hatred and the revenge of the impious. What must I then feel, when I regard the death of Jesus as the death of my best Friend, of my Brother, my Saviour, as the death which he underwent on my account? And how

intolerably great must the dying agonies of Jesus have been, when he uttered, in such a piercing tone of grief, My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ? He was, it is true, nailed to the cross, and exposed to the wrath of God ; but he was likewise certain of his speedy liberation. He had endured all, without murmuring at his most barbarous and unprovoked usage. He saw the moment advancing which was to finish his misery, and crown his hardships with reward. He was assured of the constant love of his Father, and of the glorious issue of his sufferings ; yet, notwithstanding this powerful support, was Jesus quite overwhelmed by the magnitude of his sufferings. And shall I contemplate his torments with insensible indifference ? No, the forsaken Jesus demands from me my richest tribute of compassionate love and of tender sympathising tears. I will not, I cannot deny it to him.

But even this offering is far too small for the infinite greatness of the affection which my Jesus has shown to me. If even every tear that I shed were a tear of the most piteous fondness, if my whole heart were inflamed with the utmost ardour of endearment, though I devoted every moment of my life to him alone, though all my desires were solely directed to him, though my entire present existence, and that which I anticipate in eternity, were employed in nothing else than in songs of gratitude to his name, yet I should never make due acknowledgment for what I owe to him. How much less shall I be able to recompense his vast love if I only, in some degree, confess him outwardly, and carry esteem for him merely on my tongue, while I deny him, so to speak, in my heart. No, with this cold acknowledgment Jesus will not be contented. He will be the Lord of my heart : he demands that love toward

him should prevail over all my other affections. From the cross he claims my heart, which belongs to him alone, but out of which worldly passions and vices have banished him. He claims my heart as the only acknowledgment which he expects, or to which he has regard, and as a gift which is more agreeable to him than any other offering could be, though it were the sacrifice of the wealth of the universe. For the sake of the blood which he shed for me, for the sake of the anguish of his abandonment, which he could never have experienced if it had not taken place on my account, he deserves far more than my whole love. And how can I leave this desire unfulfilled, how can I continue to present my heart as an offering to the world, to sin, and to vanity? Yes, divine Redeemer! it shall be thy property. Only to thee will I live; thee alone will I seek to please, thee alone will I strive to copy and to follow.

Would I give myself up to sin?—To sin! What ingratitude, what heinousness, were this! Could I, then, without horror and madness, think of Jesus on the cross? Frightful are the punishments with which God has menaced sinners, but far more dreadful is the chastisement with which Christ was chastised. Frightful is it to fall into the hands of the living God when the scourge is there; but one thing exceeds this and all that is terrible—to see Jesus, the spotless, writhing under the anger of the Lord, incensed at iniquity! How then, in the infatuation of my sensual propensities, can I look upon sin as a trifle? Avarice, injustice, attachment to the world, appear in my moral sight insignificant objects, or, at least, such venial errors, that I have no reason to fear reprehension concerning them. But shall they still remain trifles to

me, when I remember that it was in consequence of these that my Saviour had to endure the avenging judgment of the Omnipotent, to feel himself forsaken by his father? Ah! look to Golgotha! to Golgotha! thou insane sinner! Wouldst thou know in what light God sees thy transgressions, wouldst thou be fully aware of the abomination of thy offences, wouldst thou know what thou hast hereafter to dread from the fierce wrath of the righteous Jehovah, go to Golgotha, behold thy deserted Jesus, and tremble.

But thou, health-desiring soul! draw near to thy forsaken Redeemer, and comfort thyself in thy woes. Gather from the cross of Jesus defence against thy calamities, consolation against the charges of thy conscience, refreshment under the enfeebling languor of death. Perhaps thou art dejected and spiritless when thou seemest to be without aid in misfortune, when the Lord seems tardy to help, when he hastens not at thy prayer; perhaps under the pressure of thy grief thou burstest forth into the cry, My God has forsaken me! my God has forgotten me! Anguished heart, behold Jesus! Was he less beloved by his Father when the latter, according to his inscrutable decrees, loaded him with the sharpest afflictions, than now, when he sits at his right hand on the throne of glory? Even in the day in which the Lord hides his face from thee, when all consolation and hope seem to be taken from thee, even then hold fast to the love of thy Father—the Father, too, of thy Saviour in heaven—and confidently expect consolation from him in the hour which he has preordained for thy help; it will come at last, that joyous hour of deliverance will come at last. Think of Jesus: higher his extreme desolation could not rise when the awful words were extorted from his

soul, My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ? But scarcely had he pronounced them ere his trouble was over. And thus also with thee, when thy sorrows shall appear to have reached their utmost summit, the moment will be nigh which is to change thy plaints into songs of gratulation. And this will most certainly happen when thy weary head droops for the slumber of death. This change will surely bring to thy soul comfort and ease, if thou only keep thy trust steadfastly in thy God. The view of Jesus, forsaken in his last necessity, will rouse thy downcast spirits under the remembrance and the expectation of the judge, and the perfect sacrifice which he has presented for thy sins will protect thee against the terror of the grave and eternity. From the elevation of his cross he will show to thee the merciful equity of the reconciled God, death swallowed up in victory, thy sins blotted out by his blood, hell closed under thy feet, and heaven standing open to thy undeceiving hope !

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### CONTEMPLATION XXXIX.

#### *The Thirst of Jesus on the Cross.*

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar : and they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.—  
JOHN, xix. 28, 29.

JESUS had nearly surmounted all the torments of the cross, which he had already, with wonderful composure,

endured for six hours. Yet one unexperienced species of pain, according to the decrees of God, still remained in reserve for him, ere his labours and distresses could be fully consummated by death. He had still to feel the misery of extreme thirst, and, in augmentation of that misery, to content himself with the most wretched refreshment that could be offered to him to moisten his parched lips. This was the moment in which these words of the fifteenth and sixteenth verses of the twenty-second Psalm were made good to their full extent, "I am poured out like water; and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws." In less than twelve hours he had sustained such a series of sufferings as had exhausted his whole corporeal force, exsiccated the juices of his body, and consumed his vital spirits. Hence it is not extraordinary, that his gasping lungs languished for a cordial. But at the same time there prevailed in his soul a longing, doubly strong, after a far higher and more delicious solace. He thirsted after the blessedness in his Father's bosom; he panted after the salvation of the sinning world, for which he had already borne such unutterable griefs.

Here I also find an emblem of that state in which approaching death will one day or other place me. Though I die not on the cross, though I undergo not such violent enervation, nor feel so much pain before my decease as my adored Jesus did, yet I shall still be compelled to pine and sigh for relief. That devouring fire that may rage in my entrails, that obstructed flow of my curdled blood, by which the action of my veins may be stopped, and that cold sweat

which shall bedew my limbs, will fill me with a burning thirst, and the most uncontrollable desire of some cooling draught to allay my feverish pangs. Yet how much happier shall I be, in these circumstances, than Jesus ! My friends, my attendants, my distant acquaintance, nay, even my most exasperated enemy will, from compassion, present to me a quenching drink : at least a cup of water will be granted to recreate me ; at least I shall not be mocked and laughed to scorn in my agonies. Ah ! let me remember thee, my Saviour ! in my last excruciating thirst, and at every alleviating drop which I shall sip, praise the goodness which thou vouchsafest to show me in my dying moments.

But I can imagine that a still more vehement craving than the sense of thirst will possess my soul in the hour of death. However unconcerned for my salvation and light-minded I may have been in the days of health, I know that, at my death, I shall think more seriously and rationally. At least it is my ardent hope, that I may then, when no earthly restorative will invigorate me, then, when I shall perceive in their most glaring colours the idleness and vanity of all worldly pleasures ; then, when the whole globe, with all its joys and gorgeous wealth, would be insufficient to satisfy my spirit—then it is my ardent hope, I repeat it before thee, O my God ! that I may thirst, with all the affections of my heart, after the springs of grace and the refreshments of eternity. And then, my Saviour ! let me not, I beseech thee, be deprived of this longed-for grace, or unquickened by thy mercy. Grant to me, then, abundant and everlasting refreshment, and appease the infinite thirst of my soul by the enjoyment of the blessings in store for me in heaven. Yes, thitherward,

thitherward will my spirit yearn when it cannot find any more rest on the earth. There will my faith fix its gaze when all terrestrial objects vanish from my view. There, there shall I seek to be, where I can eternally behold God's countenance.

Perhaps when I am near to death, another desire will rise in my heart. I shall wish, perhaps, that the partner of my bed, that my children, that my trusty associates, or that those to whom I have occasioned error or scandal through my tenour of life, may also become blessed, and attain to eternal felicity. And this supplication of my spirit, O Saviour! thou wilt also accomplish, which will prove for my languishing soul the most potent and delightful solace.

As long, however, as I live in this world, thy thirst, endured on the cross, must continue unceasingly in my memory. Oh! let me, then, think of this, if the lust of unpermitted recreations, and of the misuse of thy gifts, should ever usurp dominion over my mind. Let me think of this, when, through the bounty of God, I enjoy with pleasure any lawful gratification. Let me think of this when bodily distemper, or the consciousness of sin, is a burning heat within me. Finally, when I thirst for the last time in this life, and nothing sublunary can any more bring me relief, then let me think of thee, and for the sake of thy grievous unslaked thirst be recreated for ever. For I shall at length arrive where I shall neither hunger nor thirst, and where neither trouble nor sorrow can molest me.



## CONTEMPLATION XL.

*The Consummation of Jesus through Death.*

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished ; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.—JOHN, xix. 30.

Now at length arrived the moment when Jesus, after the most harrowing sensations of anguish and pain, found that refreshment, which reinvigorated him for all the duration of his being without end. The cruelty of his foes had hitherto withheld from him every species of solace : but of the great comfort which he derived from the completion of his mediatorial office on earth, of that comfort, which he had set to himself as the aim of his whole life and of all his sufferings—of this neither the power and violence of his worldly enemies, nor the malice of hell itself could deprive him. In the dreadful hours of agony which he had till now passed, the prospect of his consummation and of the blessed issue of his afflictions, was that which alone sustained him. The idea of his high destination, and the redemption of sinners, which was to be effected by it, occupied his entire soul, and made him ready to undergo even the most dreadful pangs of death. With what divine joy, then, must his heart have been now filled, when he saw himself at the end of his glorious career, and the whole work brought to a close, to which he had been appointed by his Father. Certain of victory he was enabled to exclaim triumphantly **IT IS FINISHED !**

The entire purpose of his mission was finished. During all his course on earth, in his youth as well as

in his riper years, in solitude as well as in social intercourse, in his good as well as in his evil days, he had walked conformably to his divine mission, and with most punctual fidelity performed the will of him who sent him. Nor did he perform less strictly his duties towards his brethren, men. He had been sent to preach the gospel to the poor and the miserable, to announce God's counsel of the salvation of the human race, and to point out the ways of peace and of eternal life. In all these commissions he evinced himself to be indefatigable even to the last. It constituted, throughout the entire period of his incarnation, his most delightful employment to promote the amendment of all, to seek the lost, and to gather them into the folds of bliss; to rescue such as were in danger, to help the wretched, and to obtain grace for the whole world. In this achievement he had wasted his strength, without ever allowing himself to be either daunted or tired by the most agonizing sufferings from furthering and promoting the welfare and deliverance of a sinful race. But now all this was fulfilled, and the object of his advent attained. Hence he was able to say, *It is finished!* That full tremendous sacrifice was finished, which he had offered up for the atonement of mankind, and to which all prior types and prophecies had referred. All that appertained to the utmost compass of his meritorious and appointed sufferings had been undertaken and undergone by him. In no instance had he hesitated to submit to the punishment and to load himself with the guilt of the iniquitous. No sooner could he, no sooner would he, bow his head, than till he was able to expire with the assurance, that perfect reconciliation was made for the mortal race, and that he had satisfied the justice of

his Father—and, therefore, he could cry in his last moments: **IT IS FINISHED!**—Finished were all the sufferings which he was doomed to bear for the atonement of our sins, and to endure, both in mind and body, in such painful and diversified variety. Farther, neither the hardships of his life nor the fury of his enemies was able to proceed. Now had his tortured limbs rest, and his tormented soul peace; and he could also in this point of view pronounce the happy words: **It is finished!** Thus was my Jesus able to speak at the termination of his life; but if I were conscious at this moment of being likewise near to my death, could I also repeat with such confidence, **It is finished?** Could I also look back with such tranquillity to my former days? Even to me, too, O Father! hast thou appointed a task, to the execution of which I ought to devote all my strength and faculties, and my whole term of existence. When thou broughtest me into the world, it was thy design that I should act conformably both to my immortal and to my temporal vocation. But I am obliged, when I think of this, to cast my eyes backward upon my past years with shame and remorse. How few of those things have I performed, which I ought to have accomplished! I see but too well how much I have still to make up, if I am to be at my death as glad in my final consummation as my Saviour was in his. And perhaps I am not more remote from death than he was, when he so emphatically uttered, **It is finished!** I will, therefore, hasten to dedicate every moment, which is yet vouchsafed to me, to the completion of this important business. Formerly I offered up my members to my turbulent appetites: now I will sanctify them, I will sanctify them to the Lord that redeemed them. Hi-

therto I was unsolicitous for my soul; but now it shall remain my most important, my exclusive care to watch over it and snatch it from perdition. Formerly I gave offence to the world in my manner of living; now I will edify it by my conduct. Hitherto I have been uncharitable and merciless; now I will seek my glory and prosperity, as far as I can, in beneficence. Hitherto I have despised Jesus; now he shall be dear to me above all things. Lord! thou knowest my good intentions: lend me strength too, that I may put them into effect. I would very fain be like to thee, O Jesus! in death—as serene, and as full of confidence! Ah! aid me then to fulfil my appointed charge in the present world: aid me to adjust my weighty concerns of salvation. There will not yet be wanting in the end reproofs enough for my conscience to make against me: however true and faithful I may have been, I shall still be compelled to confess, that many deficiencies and imperfections remain, on account of which I must trust to my God for mercy. But in these circumstances I may rely at least upon this cheering truth, that Jesus has finished all in my stead. His merits will cover my deficiencies. The assurance of the atonement wrought through him will preserve me from despair. However numerous, therefore, my imperfections should present themselves to my conscience at my death, this shall not dismay me; but I will promise to myself from the grace of Christ the most happy consummation. I have this confidence in him, that by virtue of his atonement all will be completed in me, that is requisite for my salvation. I shall not die till all the decrees of God for my well-being are accomplished.

IT IS FINISHED!—This is the watch-word which

I will use at the conclusion of my mortal destiny. All that life carries in it of heaviness, and all that death has of bitterness, will at one period or other be ended. All toils and troubles, all hard and wearisome struggles with the sins that so cleave and stick to us, all oppressions of injustice and wickedness ;—in brief, each and every vexation with which this state of trial is blended and embittered within and without, will then be eternally finished. And all this I owe to the blessed Consummator of my salvation ; to whom be glory for ever and ever ! Amen.

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### CONTEMPLATION XLI.

#### *Jesus' Preparation for Death, on the Cross.*

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.—LUKE, xxiii. 46.

HITHERTO Jesus had still directed a few thoughts to his own sufferings, and cast a few glances upon his friends ; but now he raises his whole heart up to Him from whom he had come, and to whom he was again about to return. How instructive is this conduct of Jesus for me ! An hour will arrive, when I shall be torn from the connexion of my best friends, and from that of all mortal beings ; when this globe with all its productions, all its riches, and all its allurements, will be void of charms for me. In this hour of separation from the world, I will fulfil the duties of friendship and humanity. I will, as far as I shall be enabled, provide for the good of my family, my more distant

kindred, and all to whom I am dear, and seek to tranquillize their minds. But above every thing I will incline my heart to God. Long enough have I divided my affections betwixt the Lord and the world ; now must I devote to him all my desires and inclinations, and make my union with him my chief object of endeavour. For a christian, who is on the point of passing into another, better world, all that the present one contains is too low and trifling to quiet or invigorate his heart. Only God and eternity are able to exalt the dying over the world and time ; and alone deserve to form the exclusive subject of his thoughts.

In this frame of mind Jesus proceeded with the greatest cheerfulness and serenity to encounter death. He knew that this catastrophe would be the end of all his labours, and his ingress to everlasting rest. He was assured of the glory which his Father would bestow upon him after his sufferings. How courageous shall I also be at the sight of death, if I can regard it under this aspect ! Only for him who knows not death rightly does it wear a frightful form. But to the follower of Jesus death is the end of all troubles, and the beginning of a condition of joy and glory, estimable beyond measure or expression. He is so little terrified at it, that he rather wishes for its coming, and blesses its happy arrival when present. The solicitude with which my Saviour resigned his soul into the hands of his Father is especially affecting to me in the example of Jesus in his last moments. And justly should this also be my most particular endeavour, to seek to preserve the soul which has been intrusted to me, under all circumstances and vicissitudes ; and to keep it in this immediate time, so uncontaminated, that it may at the end be an offering worthy

of recommendation to God. This effort appertains to my whole existence, and to every day and moment of it. The care of my soul is compatible with the most busy and laborious life, and according to the views of God, it must absolutely be so. Amid all other concerns, and amid all the distractions of my temporal station, this exertion must ever retain the uppermost rank. That language which is so often heard—"I have now so little time to think of my soul; but I will, however, one day or another disentangle myself from the world—would that I could do so now, but the necessities of my house are so great—my affairs are so complicated and extensive," is very unbecoming in the mouth of a christian. It is a happiness, indeed, when a man in his old age, or on the bed of sickness, is able to free himself from the bustle of life, and to find an interval between the tumult of the world and the stillness of death, which he may wholly turn to the benefit of his soul, and to his qualification for eternity. But how few can employ themselves for the welfare of their souls, when they delay this occupation till the crisis at issue. If our soul has really a value in our estimation, then it must be with us the first and most important concern, in subservience to which every other consideration, as being merely secondary, must be regulated.

Raise, then, thyself at last, my soul! out of the dust of the earth. Abandon those worldly cares which so much debase thee. Come to thyself; call home thy thoughts; bethink thee of thy exalted nature! Venture once for all to soar up thither where thy eternal residence shall be! Learn to-day to indulge such wishes, to embrace such plans, to undertake such enterprizes as are worthy of thee! Learn, that thy

greatness consists in thy being great in the kingdom of heaven, great through faith and humility ; thy riches in thy being rich in God, and in thy gathering of treasures on high ; thy felicity in thy being felicitous in Christ, standing closely to him in faith, and possessing the conscious power of comforting thyself with the assurance of his favour ! To this end direct thy labours continually ;—to this all thy endeavours and attempts, all thy desires and affections ! Awake, awake, my soul ! look around thee : let not the world deceive, nor blind, nor intoxicate thee. Feel thy higher worth, which exalts thee above all immediate things ; feel thy immortality ; plunge into the deeps of eternity, where thou must ere long be either miserable or happy for ever ! Behold thy God !—see how he has remembered thee with tender mercy ; how he has loved thee everlastingly ; how he has decreed thy felicity from eternity ! Consider thy Jesus !—think how he has toiled for thee, wrestled for thee, fought for thee !—And thou thyself wouldst give no heed to thy weal ? Thou wouldst voluntarily destroy thyself ? Thou wouldst frustrate to thy heavenly Father the designs of his love, and to thy Saviour the fruits of his death ?

No, it shall not be thus with me : from thee, expiring Jesus ! from thee I will learn the duty of studying beyond every other good the health and safety of my immortal spirit. Not then, for the first time, shall this be taken to my heart, when the world with all its pleasures is become loathsome to me.—No, even now, while I can enjoy life and the gratifications of life, I will commend thee, O my soul ! to God. Thus shall I, after all my destined trials, be enabled to die as tranquilly and as blessedly as my Saviour.



## CONTEMPLATION XLII.

*The Wonders attending the Death of Jesus.*

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom ; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent ; and the graves were opened ; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.—**MATT. xxvii. 51, 52, 53.**

THUS must the Father illustrate the Son in his death !—It was consistent with the deity, and with his wisdom and omnipotence, to particularize and glorify the memorable end of so wonderful and extraordinary a personage with astonishing and supernatural occurrences ; giving the whole world to know, that he, who had been executed by the fury of the Jews, was no evil-doer, but his own only-begotten Son, in whom he was well pleased. The veil of the temple, which separated the sanctuary from the holy of holies, was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom. This curtain served till the time of the nearer revelation of Jehovah's grace in the Redeemer, to keep the Jewish people from free access to the holy of holies, and from the sight of the glory of God. But as it now, at the death of Christ, burst asunder, an annunciation was thus made, that the whole Levitical worship was annulled, and the economy of the New Covenant unalterably established. Now, no longer were the priests alone to appear with prayer and incense before God ; and the people to adore only at a distance. Now was the service of the Most High to be celebrated by every worshipper without fear, without concealment of the sacred

things, and without animal offerings, in spirit and in truth.

With what joy may not I also take part in this new institution of the Lord. Now through faith in Jesus I have unrestrained approach to the throne of grace. I have the felicity of an open entrance into the holy of holies, through the Saviour's blood. I need not dread to be driven from his countenance, when, with a sincere heart, in fulness of faith, and void of a bad conscience, I draw near to his footstool. And if, here, during all the days of my earthly pilgrimage, I served the Lord in sanctity and righteousness, I have the most ravishing hope, that I shall hereafter behold him face to face, enjoy his presence in perfection, and partake of his glory. All the darkening veils which may have obstructed my more intimate communion with God will be rent, when my soul severs itself from my body; and I shall then be admitted to assist in the worship of the angels, where the Lamb will be my temple and my all in all.

As Jesus expired, the earth quaked. The Lord proclaimed, through this shock of nature, how exalted and dignified the being was, who had just perished on the cross; and what terrible retribution his murderers had deserved and might have met, had he chosen to deal with them according to his power and to strict justice. They had deserved that the earth should have swallowed them up, who had slain the Holy One and the righteous, the Prince of life! And, indeed, that no injurious consequences followed this convulsion of the trembling ground, they owed to the intercession of the crucified Victim himself, through which he had implored pardon and time for reformation, if they would but use the opportunity, for his very murderers.

Oh ! how often have I too, in my great iniquity, merited to have been destroyed from off the face of the earth. But for thy death's sake, my Saviour ! thou hast borne with thy backsliding, apostate creature, and with indulgent goodness granted to me respite for repentance ! Oh ! would that I might only mark thy signs, which now through punishments and now through benefits seek to warn my heart, ere yet the moment arrive, when there shall be no rescuer more.

On the occasion of this earthquake the rocks rent, and the graves which were hewn in the rocks, opened ; and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, even Jerusalem, and appeared unto many.—God ordained these events from designs commensurate with his infinite intelligence. The rending of the vail of the temple, and particularly the splitting of the rocks, at the instant in which Jesus gave up the ghost, must have been universally remarked. The Jews had, thus, placed before them an assemblage of astonishing and striking wonders, incapable of elucidation by any of the ordinary rules of nature's operations, and evidently the miraculous work of the Lord's immediate hand, to awaken their attention and excite them to the contemplation of him whom they had dared to crucify : while the christians, who saw so many pious persons departed from this life, and perhaps former acquaintances, return back out of their tombs, would thereby be corroborated in their faith in the resurrection of Jesus. For the reviviscency of such a multitude of holy men, at this time, might be looked upon as a trophy of the might and glory of Christ in his rising from the dead, and as a plain and persuasive demonstration, that he had obtained the victory over

death, and was actually entered into his kingdom. The christians could easily conclude from this far more than human proof of the potency of Jesus how strong and efficient their Redeemer was, and how well able to subdue his own enemies together with all theirs, whenever such should be his desire. Here was a lively emblem of what Jesus will effect in all those who, at the general resurrection on the last day, sleep in the dust of the earth ; then will Christ descend from heaven, as the scriptures, those oracles of truth, import, accompanied by myriads of holy angels, begirt with omnipotence, and clothed with unspeakable splendour. With a tremendous earthquake he will shake the world to its foundations, tear asunder the rocks, and unlock the graves of all the children of Adam. Not only the sepulchres around Jerusalem, but the tombs, in all places, will be suddenly opened ; and the bodies, that rest in them, will be roused out of their long and profound slumber. The earth and the sea too will yield forth their dead, and all the hills and vales be removed out of their places. So likewise, on my resurrection, my entrance into the City of God, the New Jerusalem that is in heaven, will take place. Thus I shall see myself in the company of those with whom I had lain in close vicinity under the same mould. Thus, we shall all of us again know one another, and reciprocally appear to each other as ancient friends. Thus, I shall only awaken out of my sleep of death to hear such new and invigorating truths, to see such great works as these saints heard and saw in their manner, when they learned and beheld the finished sacrifice of the Incarnate Saviour. Thus I too shall see him, and shall behold him, as he is ; no longer as a lifeless corse, but in his glorified figure of perfect God.

And therefore shall my resurrection, which will **one** day most certainly come, constitute even now my **quiet**, my consolation, my hope.

I thank thee, O Prince of life ! that thou hast **taken** away the dominion from death, and snatched its **prey** from the grave. I thank thee, that, because I am **here** a member of thy body, I shall also hereafter be **united** with thee, and with all my brethren in thee, in **eternal** bliss.

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### CONTEMPLATION XLIII.

*The Effect of the Miraculous Events which accompanied the Death of Jesus, upon the Spectators of those Wonders.*

Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.—MATT. xxvii. 54.

AND how was it possible, under such circumstances, to remain unmoved ? If I had witnessed the sublime death of this divine Innocent, and the miracles which followed it, I should, perhaps, have felt more, and displayed stronger signs of sensibility. What could have restrained me from openly declaring myself for a disciple of Jesus, and encouraging others to become his disciples too ? I see four descriptions of spectators standing around the cross of Jesus. Many look upon him to indulge cruelty ; yet more out of curiosity ; a few yield to the impulses of pity and human love ; and the smallest number experience those feelings with

which the death of Christ ought to be regarded. In which class should I have been found? At least my heart assures me that I should not have been capable of that barbarous joy which the scribes, the elders, and the high priests, manifested at the view of the crucified Jesus. But whether I should not have belonged to that throng which attended the execution from curiosity; whether I should have been touched with aught more acute than that compassion which we cannot wholly refuse even to the most enormous malefactors?—these are questions concerning the reply to which I have great reason to be apprehensive.

I need only, however, investigate what affections are now predominant in my soul, while I here, in solitude, meditate upon the sufferings and the death of Jesus; and from these I shall be able to infer the nature of those which would most likely have prevailed in my bosom if I had been personally present at the crucifixion of Jesus. Does the consideration of the sufferings of Christ make a strong impression upon my heart? Do I perceive and acknowledge the value of his love, and the importance of all that he has done and endured for me? Do I reflect with detestation upon the sins which have occasioned to my Redeemer so much toilsome misery and so many grievous troubles? Do I prize the salvation which he has acquired for me, according to its worthiness? Should I, from love towards my Saviour, and gratitude for his sufferings on my account, be ready to accommodate myself with willingness to any command which he might give to me, and cheerfully to bear all the sorrows which he might think fit to put upon me? Is it my favourite and most pleasing occupation to meditate upon the atoning and meritorious life and death of my Redeemer? Do I

prefer the fruits of that life and of that death to **all** delights and possessions of the earth ?

Let me examine my heart candidly and ingenuously : I am not wholly void of emotion when I remember the agony and distresses of my Saviour, when I peruse the recital of them, or hear them spoken of by others. The tears that start from my eyes, the sighs that rise from my bosom, assure me that every sentiment of sympathy and rectitude is not yet banished from my soul. But I have hitherto observed, that these tears easily and speedily dry up, that these sighs are quickly repressed as soon as I quit the house of God or my own privacy to mix, as usual, in the intercourse of the world. I am aware of the value of the love of Jesus ; I see how much he has effected for me, in order to rescue me out of wretchedness and perdition. But, then, I, on my part, have performed so little for my Redeemer ! I know how much my sins have cost him, and that my misdeeds have occasioned him a load of trouble and anguish ; and yet I have hitherto felt little abhorrence for my vices and wicked inclinations ! How violently also do my passions rebel against the gospel of Jesus crucified ! My prevailing propensities render the sadness which the pangs of Jesus produce in the mind loathsome and insupportable. My ambition hinders me from making my so deeply debased Saviour the object of my aspiring wishes and imitation. My numerous distractions and dissipated thoughts are the cause that the most affecting representations of the sorrows and distresses of the Son of God make no impression, or only a very slight one, upon my spirit.

O Father in Christ Jesus ! look upon me, thy poor mortal, when desirous of contemplating, for the good of my soul, the sufferings of thy only-begotten. Do

thou touch my heart as oft as I think of the truths in which all consolation for me is treasured up. And thou, Jesus! abounding in mercy and grace, incline all my thoughts, dispositions, and desires to thyself and to the blessed harvest of thy cross. Let it be my wisdom, my joy, and my comfort, to know that thou hast died for me!

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## CONTEMPLATION XLIV.

### *The Interment of Jesus.*

When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.—MATT. xxvii. 57—60.

Is the grave of every departed individual an object worthy of contemplation, how much more so must this be the case with the sepulchre of Jesus! Here my spirit finds a treasury of the most blessed truths, all powerful to strengthen my belief, to confirm my hope, to increase my love for Christ. Truly, here also I behold the deep debasement to which Jesus had to submit. Was it not, indeed, humiliation, that likewise, in this appointment of human nature, he was doomed to be assimilated to the common progeny of Adam, and be laid in the dark mansion of the dead? Was it not humiliation, that his body had to be begged as a



boon from Pilate? Yet I still see him, in the midst of his utmost lowliness, glorified. His grave was intended by his enemies to be with the wicked. But God directed it otherwise: he rested beside the rich in his form of death; and both his friends and foes were made to be subservient to the promotion of his honour in the tomb. God brought forward a person who, from wholly disinterested motives, kindly provided for the interment of Christ; and his adversaries themselves, impelled by an irresistible divine authority, corroborated, against all their hopes, purposes, and wishes, through the very precautions which they employed to the contrary, the assurance of his actual decease and resurrection. For as he did not remain hanging on the cross, nor was taken down from it till his side had been pierced through, no doubt could be in the least entertained of the reality of his death. And as he received a grave not in an open public place, but in an enclosed garden; and farther, as his body was laid in a new sepulchre which had been hewn out of a rock, and the aperture of which was covered with a great stone; all objections which might have been alleged against his resurrection were, through these circumstances, quite enfeebled, or rather rendered totally nugatory.

Now, since I also have to expect, sooner or later, this fate,—and cannot but dread it,—that men will deposit my inanimate corse in the grave, the tomb of my Saviour may at present tend to the tranquillization of my fears, and to the general quiet of my mind. As my Redeemer rested at length after a long trial, so shall I, at last, repose in the bosom of the earth from all my past hardships and calamities. And even here, too, my body will not be subjected to any for-

tuitous accident of blind chance. I shall sleep in peace, for the Lord protects me. He will also appoint to me a small space, where my weary bones may lie undisturbed, and watch over my body, that no limb, nay, that no particle of it, be lost. And, finally, I can hold myself assured of this great truth, that when I shall have slumbered for a few days in the ground, I shall again rise from the narrow house of corruption, regenerated and perfected in incorruptibility and immortality.—For all these comfortable convictions and anticipations, and for the realization of the whole, which I shall presently experience, I have to thank thy death and thy grave, O Jesus! Praise, therefore, and adoration be ascribed and paid to thee by me and by all men now and in eternity! Amen.



**PART II.**

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**EXPLANATORY PARAPHRASE**

**OF THE**

**GOSPEL NARRATIVE**

**OF THE**

**SUFFERINGS OF JESUS.**

**WITH**

**SHORT PRACTICAL INFERENCES, OR APPLICATIONS  
TO THE HEART.**



# EXPLANATORY PARAPHRASE.

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## SECTION I.

THE RELATION OF SOME OF THE MORE REMARKABLE OCCURRENCES IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS.

### I. ANNUNCIATION OF THE REDEEMER'S SUFFERINGS.

JESUS having finished his discourse concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the last judgment, which he had delivered to a large concourse of hearers on the mount of Olives, proceeded, as soon as the people were departed, in the company of his disciples towards Bethany. To these, his followers, he then addressed himself in particular, and said, "Ye know that in two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified."

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. Jesus went not to his voluntary death till he was convinced that he had completed all things appertaining to the instruction and salvation of mankind. Oh ! may I, too, have the consolation, on the approach of death, to know that I have performed every duty incumbent upon me as a man, as a citizen, as a christian, and whatever other character may have been appointed to me in life !

2. The nearer Jesus drew to the termination of his course, the more zealous he was to employ every

moment well. What a lesson is this for me to make the most of my time, since my death may, perhaps, be at a much shorter distance from me than I imagine !

3. With what serenity of mind does Jesus speak of his impending sufferings and death ! Did I foresee severe afflictions and death impending immediately over me, could I likewise think of them without the least discomposure ? Yes, I should be able to do so if I had lived as uprightly as Jesus.

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## II. CONSPIRACY TO MURDER JESUS.

AT the very time that Jesus had predicted this to his disciples, all the members of the high council, namely, the chief priests, the scribes, and the other persons in magisterial authority among the Jews, assembled together. They chose for this purpose the palace of the high priest Caiaphas, and not, as was otherwise customary, a part of the temple, that they might carry on their dark consultations as secretly as possible. In regard to the putting of Jesus to death, they had been already long unanimously agreed. At present, therefore, their sole object was to devise how they might take Christ by subtlety and kill him, being at the same time apprehensive of the multitude, whom they knew to be attached to him. Hence they said among themselves, "Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people."

### *Practical Inferences.*

I see, from the circumstances above related, how

strictly our Saviour stood under the overruling providence of God. Firmly determined as his enemies had long been to slay him, and powerful as they were, yet they could not execute their purpose till his hour arrived.

2. Of what atrocious crimes are those men capable who allow themselves to be carried away by their passions ! No rank, no condition, no mode of life, are able to defend us against the attacks of vice.

3. How prompt and eager do we here find a whole assembly (which in other respects was venerable) to cut off an innocent person ! Such are still too often the feelings which the patriotic and righteous excite in the envious breasts of other men, and the fate to which they are exposed.

4. The crafty manner in which the enemies of Jesus acted is a proof of the justice of his cause, and a consequence of the seared and evil consciences of his persecutors, which, from time to time, in spite of their obduracy, throbbed within them.

5. The fear of man is principally predominant on the commission of vicious actions. He that does right is not afraid.

6. The thoughts of God are not as men's thoughts. According to the views of the adversaries of Jesus, his execution was not to take place at the Easter-festival. But that was exactly the epoch which God had selected for this tremendous catastrophe. Already, through this divine appointment, a way was paved for the diffusion of the gospel.



## III. THE ANOINTING OF JESUS.

ENGAGED in most instructive discourse had Jesus and his disciples reached Bethany, a town situated at the distance of about a league from Jerusalem. Here he entered into the house of Simon, whom he had formerly cleansed of the leprosy, to enjoy with him the last supper. And as they sat at meat, there came a woman into the room having an alabaster box, in which there was a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly; poured the ointment on his head and anointed his feet with it, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Bethany was a remarkable place, since such righteous and pious persons as Simon, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, dwelt in it. According to this scale of comparison, every small town, every village, and every hamlet where holy individuals live, are respectively to be preferred to great, but vicious cities, how replete soever they may be with pleasure and opulence.

2. He that loves Jesus, and the members of Jesus, with sincere ardour, will deem nothing too precious to be offered up to his Lord and Saviour.

3. To the latest period of his earthly life Jesus found gratification in a social and pious intercourse with others; and he always strove to render it instructive.

4. Every thing that is to be pleasing to God must flow from true love and esteem for him.

IV. THE ACT OF LOVE DISPLAYED IN THE ANOINTING  
OF JESUS CENSURED.

SOME of the disciples, perhaps from envy and selfishness, perhaps from other prejudices, were discontented with the act recounted in the last recital. Above all, Judas, surnamed Iscariot, Peter's son, he who afterwards betrayed Jesus, manifested the most evident grudge on the occasion. He it principally was who made the indecent reproaches not only to the righteous woman, but even to Jesus himself, handed down, to his lasting disgrace, in the sacred writings. "To what purpose," said he, "is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor." However specious this insolent reproof might be in appearance, it arose not in Judas from an actual inclination to assist the indigent, but from a spirit of inordinate avarice. For he was of a most niggardly disposition, and had the bag, and had charge of what was put therein.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. It is very generally the destiny of the good, that even their best and most upright actions are wont to be blamed and uncharitably misconstrued by the evil-minded. But it is my consolation, that the unbiassed Witness and Judge of my doings dwelleth in heaven.

2. Even the most profligate are never without an apparent pretext, behind which they endeavour to screen their wicked dispositions and intentions.

3. Every benefit which I confer upon any one of the needy in the congregation of Christ, and every kindness which I show to such a one, though it even

occasion to me much temporal loss, is still a great gain for me.

4. It is the property of the miser and the narrow-minded to excuse themselves from the performance of works of charity under the pretence of necessary economy.

5. How easily may even the most godly be carried away and seduced by the society and example of the impious! A single wrong or perverse decision may often draw over the wisest of men to the side of folly.

#### V. JESUS' VINDICATION OF THE BENEFICENT ANOINTRESS.

JESUS no sooner understood the unkind sentiments of his disciples, and observed the secret grief of the well-disposed female, than he turned to them, in order to make them sensible of the impropriety of their behaviour, and thus spoke to them, with his accustomed indescribable mixture of mildness and earnestness: " 'Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For the poor ye have always with you;' and therefore ye will never want opportunity of doing good to them. 'But me ye have not always with you.' This righteous person has done all for me that lay in her power; 'for in that she hath poured this ointment upon my body, she did it for my burial.' And I assure you, that the remembrance of this deed shall remain imperishable. 'Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also what this woman hath done, be spoken of for a memorial of her.' "

*Practical Inferences.*

1. The judgment of God, in regard to our actions, is often very different from the judgment of men. Though, therefore, the world may pass a harsh and slanderous sentence upon my best works and endeavours, I still possess the cheering assurance that I have an appeal to the Lord.

2. If I am conscious of the approbation of God and Jesus, I shall be able easily to bear all the censures of my fellow-creatures. At all events, I shall then trouble myself very little about them. The world may honour or despise me, praise or blame me, I care not which. Honour with God overweighs all the rest.

3. If, notwithstanding my most laudable efforts and intentions, I have to endure the malignant opinions and false invidious reports of my brethren in general, God will still, perhaps, raise up for me a true friend to take the part of my injured innocence, or he will bring it to light through other means, and at his own gracious time.

4. Even the most hidden of my good deeds, how insignificant soever it may seem, has an honourable mention in store for it. Yet, supposing that it should remain unknown, or be forgotten here, it will, nevertheless, be published and extolled in eternity.

5. The surest way to posthumous reputation and an immortal name is the practice of virtuous actions. Vice leaves an infamous memory behind it.

6. Let us do good, while we have yet time and opportunity. How soon may my necessitous brethren, how soon may I myself be swept away from the living ! then there will be no time more for beneficence and mercy.

7. It is the most precious service of love and charity to strive to alleviate the misery of the oppressed, the persecuted, the sick, and the dying.

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#### VI. JESUS WASHES HIS DISCIPLES' FEET.

THE nearer Jesus approached to the last moments of his incarnation, the more desirous he became to bestow on his disciples the most sublime and striking proofs of his love. As a most convincing proof of this affectionate zeal the action which he performed at the supper, immediately before the feast of the passover, claims, in particular, our attention and reverence. Judas Iscariot was also present here, although the devil had already put it into his head to betray Christ into the hands of his enemies. Even before the meal seems to have been fully ended Jesus rose from the supper, laid aside his garments, and took a towel or apron, usually worn by slaves when waiting upon their masters, and girded himself. He next took a basin, a sort of vessel commonly found in every eating-room, as well for the washing of the hands and feet of the company, according to the Jewish fashion, as for the rinsing out of the vessels belonging to the table, and began, after this preparation, to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Now, when the turn came to Peter, this disciple refused, and said to Jesus, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Peter, to whom this proceeding still appeared to be an

unbecoming humiliation for Jesus, again opposed its accomplishment, and added, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answered to him, "'If I wash thee not,' if thou art not cleansed and purified by me, 'thou hast no part in me.'" Simon Peter comprehended not the entire sense of this expression, and hence he rejoined, "'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.' For there is nothing dearer to me than to have a share in thy love." Jesus said to him, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all;" which signifies, that he who has been once wholly washed requires not, immediately afterwards, to be so washed again, except indeed his feet, which are more liable to be soiled than the rest of his body, require to be laved anew. Accordingly it is not now necessary for me to wash you entirely, for ye are clean as well in respect to the body as the soul; although I cannot, it is true, say this of you all without exception. Jesus referred, by this limitation, to the betrayer, who was one of the twelve, and of whose flagitious purpose he was accurately informed through his own omniscience.

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. It is our duty, in what situation of life soever Providence may have placed us, to condescend, with the most unfeigned alacrity, to every office of love and courtesy towards our brethren.

2. With the very limited power of our understanding, it is not always possible for us to discern the object of the appointments of God, or to foresee their issue.

3. God is sometimes wont to employ means and in-

struments, apparently trivial and insignificant, in the course of his governance ; but we may, notwithstanding, always rest assured, that he has lofty and glorious views concerning us. Even the most sincere and religious minds may fall into doubt and uneasiness as to the ways of God.

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#### VII. THE WASHING OF THE FEET OF THE DISCIPLES ILLUSTRATED AND EXPLAINED.

AFTER Jesus had thus washed the feet of his disciples, and cast his upper garment again around him, he sat down once more at the table. But observing how little his followers comprehended the extraordinary act of humility which he had just performed, he immediately strove, in regard to this circumstance also, to free them from their prejudices, and to inform their understanding. “ ‘ Know ye,’ ” he therefore said, “ ‘ what I have done to you ? Ye call me Master, and Lord ; and ye say well, for so I am.’ Learn, however, by my example, what ye are bound to do as scholars and servants. ‘ If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.’ And since I, as your Master and Teacher, have not been ashamed to execute this task for you, how can ye consider it a degradation to perform the same service to each other ? I mean in different words, how can ye hesitate to stoop to one another even to the lowest testimony of mutual esteem and officious kindness ? ‘ For I have given you an

example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord: neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' Ye know indeed well what I mean, but blessed would ye be, were ye to act agreeably to this conviction."

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Jesus let no opportunity of giving salutary admonitions to his disciples pass unemployed, but availed himself of the slightest incidents, not less than of the most important events, to enlighten their minds, and promote their general improvement.

2. A proud, unaffectionate heart is wholly contrary to the spirit of true christianity. He that will be a disciple of Jesus must be of one mind with Jesus.

3. Every act of humility is not real virtue. A man may humble himself out of vanity.

4. The higher we are in the world, the more praiseworthy it is, when we place ourselves on a level with the lowly and poor.

5. The knowledge and theory of godliness without the practice are of no avail.

VIII. THE FIRST INDICATION OF THE BETRAYER.

JESUS continued his discourse and said: "'I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen'—I am fully acquainted with the dispositions and sentiments of those whom I have selected for my apostles. 'But



that the scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with me, hath lifteth his heel against me.' That appointment, I repeat it to you, is about to be accomplished, which was foreshown concerning me by the prophet David, who predicted that mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, and owed to me his support, would rise up against me and conspire to destroy me. (Psalm xli. 9.) —And this is now permitted to come to pass that the words of the inspired Psalmist may be made good. 'Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am' he, the Son of God." At these words Jesus fell into great sorrow of heart, and being thus troubled in spirit he presently testified again and said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." On hearing this declaration the disciples gazed upon each other for a while in mistrustful suspense, being dubious, who among them was meant. But there was leaning, at this time, on Jesus' bosom, one of his disciples whom he particularly loved. Simon Peter made a sign therefore to this disciple to inquire who it was, that Jesus had thus alluded to. The disciple complied, and bowing his head upon the bosom of his Master, said to him in secret, "Lord, who is it?" To which Jesus answered, "He it is, to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it." And "when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot the son of Simon." After Judas had received the sop, Satan entered into him again, and the traitorous thoughts with which, it would seem, the devil had long before inspired him, were excited anew in his mind. Then Jesus said to him, "'That thou doest, do quickly: ' Let that which thou purporest to perform be executed without delay."

—No one, however, at the table, understood the import of these words. Some thought, that Jesus had thus intimated to Judas, because the charge of the money and the care of the usual expenses devolved upon him—that he should provide necessaries for the feast. Others were of opinion, that the expression referred to the distribution of the customary alms among the poor. But Judas, as soon as he had taken the sop, rose up and went out, although it was already night.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. With what care and precaution must I pursue my christian course, when I reflect, that the Lord is thoroughly acquainted with my heart, and sees the lowest depths of my soul!

2. The example of Judas may teach me, how sin can bring a man to such a state, that he at last proceeds from one crime to another without shame or feeling.

3. It is exceedingly consolatory for me, when I observe with what condescending love Jesus bears with the weaknesses of his disciples.

IX. JUDAS' NEGOTIATION AND COVENANT WITH THE  
ENEMIES OF JESUS.

JUDAS now proceeded towards Jerusalem in order to put his villanous and disloyal enterprize into execution. As soon, therefore, as he arrived in the city, he hastened to the chief priests and captains of the temple, who

had the superintendence of the guards of the priests and Levites, and made the proposal to them, that he would deliver Jesus into their hands for a suitable reward. This offer was exceedingly agreeable to them, and they immediately promised to him thirty pieces of silver, if he would yield Christ up to them, as he had proposed. He then bound himself by an oath to perform the atrocious commission. Upon which they instantly paid to him the covenanted sum, and from this moment Judas sought a convenient opportunity to betray his Master into the power of his persecutors, in the absence of the multitude, without noise or commotion among the people.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. How zealous in the furtherance and accomplishment of his plans, and how perversely hardened does the desire of committing evil render the man, that is once rooted in depravity!—To crown their detestable purposes with success, the vicious shun no toil, danger, nor inconvenience.

2.. It is not an unusual case, that the most flagitious sins are committed by those persons who have either long worn a hypocritical appearance of holiness, or are by their office under a more particular obligation, if any comparison is here allowable, to practise piety.

3. Of what vices does a man become capable, when he has once permitted the love of money to govern in his heart! One single ruling sin may, by degrees, urge me to the perpetration of the most abominable excesses.

4. As soon as I am become such a wretch as to eradicate the love of Jesus and of piety out of my

bosom, I shall straightway, under very easy conditions, and for a less price than Judas, sell my religion, my conscience, and my country.

5. To be indifferent, amidst the exercise of sin, is in itself a great proof of corruption of mind; but to rejoice, as the enemies of Jesus did, when an opportunity of committing crimes is obtained, constitutes the highest degree of unbridled wickedness.

6. Let Judas be a warning example to me not to rely upon my own supposed good qualities; for even he was at first, when chosen by Jesus, we may presume, well disposed.

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#### X. PREPARATION FOR THE PASSOVER.

MEANWHILE came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be eaten. For which reason the disciples applied to Jesus to learn his will in regard to this festival. In reply to whose interrogation, he commissioned Peter and John to go to Jerusalem and prepare the passover. But as Jesus had no dwelling-place of his own in the city, they asked him where he desired that they should provide the feast. Jesus in return explained himself thus: "Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he entereth in. And ye shall say to the good man of the house, The master saith unto thee, where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? and he shall show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make

ready." However strange this order may have seemed to the two messengers, they nevertheless obeyed it without contradiction. And when they came to Jerusalem, they found every thing exactly as Jesus had said; and they accordingly made the necessary preparations for the approaching solemnity.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Jesus leaves not even in the least points the duties either of life or of religion unfulfilled. What a strong incentive must this prove to me to perform my obligations, not only in important affairs, but in those also which are apparently of little moment !

2. Even to the time of his death Jesus had nothing of his own in the world, in order thus to teach us, that the object of his mission was not directed to terrestrial advantages. Of how great possessions soever I am, therefore, the proprietor, all this fortune and prosperity have nothing in common with my true destination.

3. How befitting is it, that I should follow and obey the Lord, in every instance, and even when his commands appear inexplicable or impracticable to my corrupt heart !

4. Householders ! Fathers of families ! clear a place for Jesus in your habitations, and in the circle of your beloved : his presence will procure for you blessing and grace.

5. In the midst of all the lowliness in which my Jesus is placed, I behold from time to time some rays of his divinity. On the occasion before me, I see him manifest himself as the Lord, who foreknows all events, and has the hearts of men in his hands.

## XI. THE EATING OF THE PASSOVER.

TOWARDS evening Jesus reached Jerusalem with his disciples, and at the appointed time sat down to the sacred meal. When all the twelve were reclined around the table, Jesus said to them, “ ‘ With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer,’ partly to satisfy all the claims of the law, and partly to give to you this final evidence of my love : ‘ For I say unto you, I shall not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ I announce to you all, in these words, that I enjoy these meats with you for the last time, because, with my death, the economy of the new covenant of the grace of God has its commencement.” He then took the cup, which was accustomed to be sent round the table, at the beginning of the Easter-feast, prayed over it, and handed it to be divided in the usual way to his disciples ; assuring them, at the same time, that he would no more drink of the fruit of the vine, till that day when he should drink it new in the kingdom of God. Namely, that he would not again drink of it, till he should drink it in a new manner in his Father’s kingdom ; when the dominion of the New Testament of God would have appeared.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. The nearer we advance to our end, the more consolatory it is for us, when we can convince ourselves, that we have never intentionally transgressed the ordinances of God.

2. As Jesus found comfort in the exercise of the rites of religion, on the conscious approach of his death, and in the time of his severest sufferings ; so will it also

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alleviate my last alarms and pangs, and lessen my dread of dissolution and futurity, if I am capable of feeling pleasure in God and his word.

3. I may always find occasion for the remembrance and contemplation of death. On every enjoyment of food or drink, on the receiving of every pleasure which God bestows upon me, I also may say: It is now, perhaps, the last time that the former or the latter gratification will fall to my lot. Such thoughts as this would render me circumspect in the use of all terrestrial gifts.

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## XII. DISCOVERY OF THE BETRAYER.

DURING the whole meal a melancholy stillness and deep reflection on those things which Jesus had already spoken reigned among his disciples. But their sorrow was much increased, when he said to them, “ ‘ Verily I say unto you,’—I repeat to you now openly, ‘ that one of you which eateth with me shall betray me.’ ” On hearing these words they all stood again confounded. In the first moment of their renewed consternation, they only thought to inquire once more among themselves, who he could be that was capable of such an act. But when Jesus afterwards cried out for the second time, “ The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table,” they began to say to him by turns, “ Lord, is it I ? ” Jesus, in order to render his betrayer the more distinguishable, answered, “ ‘ It is one of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him : ’ that is, according to the decrees of God, and so that the prophecies may be fulfilled, shall he meet death.

‘ But woe unto that man, by whom the Son of man is betrayed :’ with him it cannot end otherwise than in misery and perdition. ‘ Good were it for that man, if he had never been born.’” Notwithstanding this exact denunciation, which Jesus had given of the traitor ; Judas, who betrayed him, was still so presumptuous and void of shame as to answer, “ Master, is it I ?” Jesus said unto him, “ ‘ Thou hast said ;’ as thou sayest, so it is.”

*Practical Inferences.*

1. I here view with astonishment the patient forbearance, and the wonderful loving kindness of Jesus. Instead of addressing the most bitter reproaches, as he justly deserved, to his betrayer, he still sought to touch his obdurate heart with the most gentle and affectionate warnings.

2. With what composure and resignation does Jesus speak of his death ! How very differently should I, in all likelihood, act and talk in similar circumstances !

3. It is a proof of a heart not wholly corrupted, when the sinner is overwhelmed with confusion and dismay so often as he considers himself or the partners of his guilt.

4. There is no better means of being preserved from sin than to be mistrustful of our own heart ; and often to put the question individually to ourselves, Is it I ?

5. God keep me from this unutterably profound misery, that, in the hour of death, or in eternity, I should be forced to say—Better would it have been for me had I never been born !

6. A long practice in sin can render a man so callous and immoveable, that neither punishments nor entice-



ments are able to terrify him, on the one hand, or to win him from his vices on the other.

7. Judas teaches me by his example, that a sinner more and more loses all feeling of shame and humanity, the longer he devotes himself to his iniquities.

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### XIII. THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

At the end of the repast Jesus took one of the unleavened loaves, and having sanctified and consecrated it with prayers and thanksgivings, and broken it, he handed a piece of it to each of his disciples, with these words, “ ‘ Take, eat ; this is my body, which is given for you : this do in remembrance of me : ’ that is to say, I thus institute for your observance the solemn eating of bread, in constant recollection of me, who am about to die for you ; and admonish you both to keep this commemorative ceremony yourselves, and to teach it to those, to whom ye shall publish the glad tidings of the gospel.”—In like manner he took the cup with wine in his hand, gave thanks, and delivered it round to his disciples, saying, “ Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” The intimation made by Jesus in these expressions purported, with a little verbal alteration, as follows : “ Drink each of you out of this cup ; for it is intended solemnly to confirm the new bond and covenant, which God has entered into and established with mankind, by the means of my blood. As often, therefore, as you drink this, let it be with the recollection, that I have shed my blood for the forgiveness of sin.”

*Practical Inferences.*

1. How deeply am I bound in duty to value the sacrament of the holy supper, when I remember under what circumstances it was instituted !

2. I cannot think often enough nor gratefully enough of the death of my Jesus, since such great felicity has been obtained for me through it.

3. I cannot conceive how the holy supper should be a mere formal rite. As it is the institution of the almost dying Jesus, who through his death confirmed the worship of God in spirit and in truth, it must assuredly have a more exalted aim, and be in design suitable to its high origin.

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XIV. THE ADMONITORY DISCOURSE OF JESUS TO HIS DISCIPLES ON THE OCCASION OF HIS EATING THE LAST PASSOVER WITH THEM.

IMMEDIATELY after the last-related occurrence, there arose a dispute among the disciples, the question being, which of them would obtain the highest place on the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. Notwithstanding the great vexation, which this conduct, on the part of his disciples, who had been so often already re-proved in vain, occasioned to Jesus, he chid them with the utmost forbearance ; and mildly repeated to them nearly the same representations which he had made to them not long before, on a similar instigation, speaking to them thus : “ ‘ The kings of the gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But ye shall

not be so;’ for it becomes not you to desire such dignities and privileges : ‘ but he that is the greatest among you’—he, I say, whoever he is, of your number, who, through his age or his qualifications, supposes that he possesses a title to preference before the rest of you—‘ let him be as the younger,’ placing himself upon a footing with him whose years are the fewest ; ‘ and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.’ So that if any one of you believes himself fit to maintain the post of a ruler over his compeers, let him act as if he were a servant beneath all. ‘ For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat or he that serveth ? Is not he that sitteth at meat ? But I am among you as he that serveth.’ I, notwithstanding that I am greater than any of you, have never desired you, nor even permitted you, to serve me ; but performed, on the contrary, for you the lowest and most menial offices. And why would ye then strive after earthly superiority ? ‘ Ye are they who have continued with me in all my temptation. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto me.’ For by reason of your faithfulness, that right shall be reserved for you, through me, which I myself hold from my Father ; ‘ that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom’—as the kings of the world suffer their favourites to feast with them at the royal board—‘ and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel,’ to whom I will send you to execute judgment with me.”

*Practical Inferences.*

1. How much patience and indulgent goodness does the Lord show to the repeated errors of his children !
2. Those who are most eager to obtain preferments and dignities are the least deserving of true honour, as they who most deserve honour seek it the least.

3. Real preference and superiority do not depend upon the external distinction of ranks and situation. The more similar a christian is to Jesus, the higher is the preference which he possesses in the eyes of God.

4. No follower of Christ can promise to himself uninterrupted happiness in this world.

5. The preeminent prerogative of the children of God is to be sought for in the world to come, and the surest way to attain to it is to be, after the example of Jesus, humble of heart.

6. Jesus spends the last hours of his life in teaching and admonishing! Oh! may I, when my end is at hand, be equally edifying!

#### XV. PETER'S WARNING.

AT the close of this discourse Jesus addressed himself in particular to Peter, either perhaps because he had been the origin of this strife, or perhaps because his Master thought that he stood more in need of admonition than the rest. “‘Simon, Simon,’” said the Lord to him, “‘Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat,’ and make it visible that thy faith is only specious, and not steadfast. ‘But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren.’—Yes, I have made especial supplication for thee to my Father, that thy faith may not be wholly overcome. For a time draws near when thy zeal shall be obscured and thy fidelity interrupted for a season. But thou wilt afterwards recover thyself, and when thou shalt be thus healed of thy error, comfort and encourage thy bro-

ther-professors of my doctrine." Peter, who believed himself to be conscious of a very different frame of mind, and far distant from such a falling-off, quickly rejoined, "'Lord, I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death.' Think not, therefore, that I can ever be unfaithful to thee." Jesus then said to him, "'Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice thou wilt deny me thrice.'" Peter would not, however, be convinced even through this explicit declaration, but exclaimed the more vehemently, "'If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.'" The same assurance was likewise given to Jesus by all the other disciples.

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. The greater the qualities and the more numerous the perfections are which the followers of Christ possess, the more violent the trials to which they are exposed.

2. The intercession of Jesus is the greatest comfort for me when at any time I fall into temptation. And it is to this that I owe that I have not already sunk under the multiplied attacks which Satan has made upon me.

3. How deceitful is my heart, and how little do I know the depth of my corruption, when I believe that I could not be capable of committing this or that sin ! I cannot be too much afraid for my heart.

4. When I have the misfortune to go astray, let it be my most anxious care to return quickly to the right path.

5. Oh ! may I also, when once converted to Jesus, edify my brethren by my godliness as much as I have hitherto grieved them by my vicious life !

XVI. THE FUTURE SITUATION OF THE DISCIPLES  
FORETOLD.

JESUS knew but too well the weakness of his disciples, which they displayed even in the midst of their best intentions. But he would not speak farther of this subject, which caused him so much pain, and which might have instigated his well-meaning, but frail friends, to make new and more rash asseverations. He chose rather, therefore, to instruct them in the nature of their approaching condition, thus speaking to them: “ ‘When I sent you’ to preach the gospel formerly, ‘without purse, or scrip, or shoes;’ though I then furnished you, I say, with nought, ‘lacked ye any thing?’ ” And they replied, “Nothing.” “But henceforward,” resumed Jesus, “ye will not enjoy such happiness. Very troublesome times will come upon you. Hardly any where have ye to expect a good reception; but rather, indeed, every where distress and persecution. Now is that common proverb among the Jews become truly applicable to you—‘He that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written’ by the prophet, ‘must yet’ (and the time is now come) ‘be accomplished in me—And he was reckoned among transgressors; for the things concerning me have an end,’ all the predictions in regard to me being nearly fulfilled to this circumstance.” The thoughts of the disciples seem to have been wholly occupied with the first part of this discourse, without reflecting upon the latter. Therefore they said, “Here are two swords.” And he said unto them, “It is enough.”

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Few things are more serviceable for the strengthening of our faith, than reflecting upon the proofs of God's support which we have received in our lives.

2. It belongs to the prudence of a christian to hold himself, in the season of prosperity and joy, prepared for that of adversity and sorrow.

3. One of the most sensible and acute sufferings which occurred to Jesus was this, that he was treated like the most detestable of malefactors.

4. Jesus was zealous to fulfil all the obligations that lay on him as the Mediator of mankind.

## SECTION II.

THE RELATION OF THE IMMEDIATE SUFFERINGS OF  
JESUS.

## I. JESUS GOING TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

AFTER the customary hymn of thanks had been sung, Jesus proceeded with his disciples towards the Mount of Olives ; holding on the way such a discourse, as partly referred to his own impending sufferings, and partly to the situation of his disciples. Among other things he said to them, “ ‘ All ye shall be offended because of me this night,’ for to your great displeasure it will occur to me, ‘ as it is written by the prophet, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered abroad ;’ for the shepherd being disabled, and no longer present to tend them, the sheep which he formerly led will flee and disperse themselves, like a panic-struck army, whose general is fallen suddenly in the field, or has been carried off captive by the foe : but ye are my flock, and I am your shepherd. ‘ Yet ye shall not remain always separated from me, for after I am risen I will go before you into Galilee ;’ there ye shall see me again in another form, and collect all together around me.”—Peter, who still retained the best opinion of the strength of his own heart, thought himself justified in assuring Jesus to the contrary ; and, therefore, answered to him : “ Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.” Jesus then reproved the self-confidence of the too presumptuous disciple, with the repeated prediction of his thrice to be reiterated denial of his Lord, before the second crowing of the cock for the



break of day. Peter, however, still persisted in his former professions, as well as the other disciples; and vowed, that he would sooner die than commit such an act of infidelity.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. The more nearly the time of my sufferings approach, the more must I endeavour to strengthen and invigorate myself for my approaching trials, through the offices of religion.

2. How often have I been warned by my conscience, or by righteous friends, against the particular errors to which I was exposing myself! Yet, from a rash reliance in myself, I have almost as often despised all admonition, and thereby accelerated my misery.

3. Consolatory to every christian bosom is that gracious superintendence and government, which Jesus possesses over the minds of men.

4. How changeable is the human heart! How soon can it forget its sworn faith!

## II. THE AWFUL PASSION OF JESUS.

JESUS, thus conversing with his disciples, passed over the brook Cedron, and came to a certain place or country seat called Gethsemane. Here there was a garden, into which he was often accustomed to go, when he wished to perform his devotions in retirement. When he had entered into this garden, he desired his disciples to remain where they were, till he should have offered up his prayers in a more remote spot,

which he pointed out to them, taking with him only three of his followers, Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John. Immediately afterwards Jesus fell into great consternation and grief, being sore amazed, sorrowful, and very heavy, so that his limbs were shaken under him. Hence he said to the disciples who were with him, “ ‘ My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Tarry here, and watch with me.’ ”

*Practical Inferences.*

1. The place where I have often spent my hours in intercourse with God, or where I have often wrought works of piety in the days of my prosperity, will redound to my great consolation in the season of adversity.

2. As often as I have to perform aught that concerns my salvation, I will withdraw from the company of the world, and even from my best friends, and betake myself to solitude.

3. A mournful and bitter stage awaits me also in my inevitable passage through the valley of death. Then will my Saviour's deep grief on the dismal way, and his going to the last bourne of life, illumine the dark path for me, and cheer me, and hold me up.

4. How enormous and abominable men's misdeeds must be, since Jesus felt, on account of them, such inexpressible agony.

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III. THE PROGRESS OF THE AWFUL PASSION OF JESUS,  
AND HIS BEHAVIOUR UNDER ITS EFFECTS.

IN the deep affliction described in the last recital, Jesus went forward a little, and kneeled, and fell upon

his face, and prayed, that, if it were possible, this hour of terror might pass from him, saying, “‘Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee;’ and if, therefore, it can be done, without violation to thy justice, or to my appointed office and duties, ‘take away this cup from me,’ either wholly exempting me from the sufferings now adjudged to me, or at least abridging and softening them. ‘Nevertheless,’ in this also I resign myself to thy decrees—‘not as I will, but as thou wilt.’” After this prayer, Jesus arose from the ground, and went to the three disciples, whom he had brought thus far with him into the garden. But to his astonishment he found them asleep! At this spectacle, he first turned to Peter, who only a little before had testified, above all the rest of the disciples, his willingness to endure with him all danger and trouble, even to the last extremity, and said to him, “Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch one hour?”—He then addressed himself in the following words to the others likewise, “‘Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.’ I counsel you to do this, not so much for my sake, as that the trials to which your virtue is exposed may not overtake you unprepared. I know, indeed, that ye are inclined, through the power of grace, to observe your duties, but the natural condition of your hearts renders you incapable of it: ‘the spirit truly is ready and willing, but the flesh is weak.’”

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Prayer will procure for me, in the hour of anguish, the greatest alleviation.
2. With what resignation and humility does Jesus perform the service of prayer! Can I humble myself to a sufficient degree of lowliness before God, when I

reflect that I am at best but a sinner, and only dust and ashes.

3. I see with what filial submission to the will of his Father, Jesus bears his sufferings. How can I then murmur at the decrees of God, under the little troubles which are appointed to me!

4. How dissimilar, indeed, am I to my Saviour! I often observe that a slight affliction renders me peevish and morose to others, and that I punish even the smallest omissions of those beneath me with bitterness and severity. Did Jesus act thus?

5. The best christians may be overtaken by surprise with dangerous weaknesses.

6. I may be placed in circumstances in which I can find little comfort from men. Well will it be for me, if the Lord be then my consolation.

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#### IV. THE HISTORY OF THE PASSION OF JESUS CONTINUED.

AFTER this gentle and loving admonition to his sluggish disciples, Jesus again withdrew a little space, and prayed as before in the most humble attitude, exclaiming; “O my Father! if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it;’ if it be not possible that I should be released from the sufferings which I foresee hanging over me, unless through my sustaining them, ‘thy will be done!’—He then returned a second time to his disciples, and with yet greater cause for wonder, saw that they again slept. He addressed to them anew incitements to watchfulness. But their

eyes were heavy and closed in sleep while he spoke, so that they knew not what they answered to him. He left them, and went again aside, and repeated, for the third time, the same prayer. But he felt himself so far from being relieved, that he seemed rather to sink wholly bereft of force under the load of his sorrows. But at length, by the order of God, an angel appeared, that strengthened him in an extraordinary manner, that he might be able to support his yet impending anguish; as even, through this heavenly help, his affliction of spirit was not to be entirely taken away. On the contrary, he wrestled yet more violently in supplication. "For being, as it were, in a death-agony, he prayed so earnestly, that his sweat ran like drops of blood upon the ground." At last he finally rose from the earth, upon which he had thrown himself, and made a third approach to his disciples, whom he once more found in their prior state of torpor and stupefaction. " 'Why sleep ye?' " said he to them. "How! will ye also sleep on for the time that yet remains? 'Sleep on now, and take your rest,' nevertheless, as to what concerns the present occasion, for I have surmounted this portion of my sufferings. Know, however, that fresh trouble awaits me. 'Behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise and pray,' therefore, 'that ye enter not into temptation,' that the trial which will quickly be here tend not to your spiritual hurt. 'Rise up, let us go' to meet him. 'Lo! he that betrayeth me is at hand!'"

*Practical Inferences.*

1. My Jesus prays repeatedly to his Father in his dread agony. How then can I be dejected, if I am,

at any time, compelled to pray several times to God without being immediately heard.

2. In my prayers it is not the choice, nor the artful arrangement of the words, which is of importance, but the ardour and earnestness of my heart. The more affected the latter is, the more simple and unstudied will also be my supplications.

3. How terrible must the torments of sin be, since Jesus, under the feelings of the sins he had taken upon himself, experiences the agonies of death, and flows in a sweat of blood !

4. When I have held out long enough beneath the burden and oppression of my heaven-appointed woes, God will likewise send to me an assuagement, of which I shall partake, and be strengthened.

5. To me too it may happen that my trouble, so long as I live, will never be totally removed ; yet one sure comfort remains to me, that death will without fail put an end to all my miseries.

6. It often occurs in the world, that one calamity seems, as the common saying intimates, ever to follow at the heels of another. Under such circumstances, I must especially invigorate myself, through faith and patience, which, if rightly possessed, will endue me with power enough to bear every thing.

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#### V. THE ARRIVAL OF THE BETRAYER.

JESUS had scarcely pronounced the concluding words of the preceding paragraph, when Judas advanced towards him. A large band followed the

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traitor, consisting partly of Roman soldiers, who, for the prevention of disturbance, were posted in the castle of Anthony, and partly of the servants of the high priests, the leaders of whom were the chiefs or captains of the temple. The soldiers were furnished with their customary swords: but the servants carried large staves, in order to use force, if Jesus should offer any opposition to their abominable and most unjust design. They had also with them, for further precaution, torches and lanterns, that, if their pursued victim should seek concealment among the bushes, they might the more easily trace his flight, and discover his place of refuge. Judas approached at a small distance before the band, with the view, perhaps, of appearing to be unconnected with the armed crowd, to whom he was serving as a guide.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Jesus went with amicable, unruffled composure to meet his enemies, being fortified through prayer, though yet more so through the purity of his actions, and the innocence of his heart. I may likewise be equally tranquil on the coming of all my distresses, if I have a good conscience, and God for my friend.

2. Jesus was occupied in the most blessed employment, when his foes came upon him. May my troubles also find me in the ways of God, in the performance of his service, and earnest in devotion!

3. I can never recur to the circumstances of this history, without feeling anew how grievous this proceeding must have been to Jesus, who was thus treated like the most atrocious of criminals.

4. However otherwise discordant and hostile the Jews and the Romans were to each other, the pepe-

tration of a confederate act of villany had here, notwithstanding, united them in unity and agreement. So it is with the friendships of the wicked in general; they are only formed for evil purposes, and last no longer than till the conspired mischief is accomplished.

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#### VI. THE MIRACULOUS OVERTHROW OF THE JEWISH BAND.

JESUS knowing every thing that would happen to him, left the place where he had last addressed his disciples, went up to the band, and said to them with the utmost composure, "Whom seek ye?" This unexpected question astonished them so much, that they neither dared, nor possessed presence of mind sufficient to tell Jesus plainly, that he it was himself whom they sought. They, therefore, replied with a species of faltering equivocation, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus, without being in the least startled at this answer, immediately rejoined; "I am he."—"And Judas also, who betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, 'I am he,' they went backwards, and fell to the ground." With these three simple words the whole concourse of guards and staffmen were vanquished, and laid prostrate. But, immediately, on their recovering in some measure from their panic and dismay, they again advanced more closely to Jesus, who with the same unshaken courage once more demanded, "Whom seek ye?" And they replied as before, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus resumed, "I have told you before that I am he. If,

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therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way. Behold, I am here, and willing to put myself into your power. I only desire, that since I am he for whom ye seek, ye will leave these my disciples in peace, and lay no hand upon them." Jesus was induced to speak thus, through his conviction of the weakness of his followers, who were not as yet so strong as to be able to suffer with him. To this also was added the fulfilment of the words, which he had so lately expressed in his prayer to God, "Of them, whom thou gavest me, have I lost none."

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Jesus was acquainted beforehand with all the griefs and events of his destiny, but he remained, notwithstanding, in the same placid quietness of heart, and never endeavoured to escape from them. If I were so instructed in all my future calamities, should I be likewise so tranquil, and so little concerned for my own personal safety, provided the good of others were at issue in my sufferings?

2. It was in the power of Jesus either to let himself be taken, or to set himself at liberty; from this I learn his willingness to suffer.

3. If the voice of Jesus the debased had such an overpowering force, with what inconceivable might will it hereafter manifest itself, when JESUS THE GLO-RIFIED shall say, on the great day of judgment, "I am he!"

4. How indulgent, and full of forbearance, is Jesus towards his enemies! It was at his option to destroy them wholly; yet he granted to them anew that life, of which they were so unworthy. What a lesson of forgiveness and mildness is this for me!

5. Scarcely do the persecutors of Jesus find themselves again in the possession of a little strength, when they apply their fresh vigour to the new exercise of sin. But do those persons act better, who, after recovery from illness, or deliverance from any other imminent danger, continue in their wonted vices?

6. In the most perilous circumstances, Jesus is more solicitous about the safety of his disciples, than about his own welfare. What a good thing, therefore, it is to be a disciple of Jesus!

7. When I shall be at the point of death, I wish that I may have the great happiness to be able to say, in the strain of Jesus, "I have not lost, at least intentionally, or through negligence, any thing at all, which God has intrusted to me."

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#### VII. JESUS TAKEN PRISONER.

THE voluntary declaration of Jesus, instead of frightening Judas from his flagitious scheme against his Lord, rendered him yet bolder and more ready to accomplish it. With a feigned friendliness he approached towards his master, in the view of kissing him; for this was the signal which he had agreed upon with the foes of Christ, when he said to them, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely;" that is, having once obtained possession of his person, hold him fast, and use all your foresight and precaution in carrying him away."—The traitor did not without cause annex this warning, for he was in sure expectation that Jesus, as he had often done be-

fore, would extricate himself in some wonderful way out of the hands of his adversaries. After the above speech, Judas accordingly stepped up to Jesus with the words, "Hail, master!" and, at the same time, kissed him repeatedly in the most affectionate manner. Jesus, who saw through the whole malice of *this* pretended fondness and diabolical salute, said to him, "'Friend, wherefore art thou come? Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?'" The betrayer remained under this gentle, yet truly impressive rebuke, as little sensible as the rest of the band, who then immediately hastened to lay hands on Jesus, and took him.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Of what infamous deeds is not a man capable, when he has once fairly hardened his heart, and shut up his soul against all warning and admonition!

2. To a sinner who is resolved to do evil, nothing is so sacred that he will not violate it; nothing so vile that he will not execute it; nothing so inhuman that he will not bring himself to perform it with indifference.

3. How much cause have I, seeing that I live in a wicked, deceitful world, even amidst the dearest assurances of friendship, and the strongest professions of kindness and courtesy, to keep myself always on my guard!

4. Am I not justified in concluding that my Saviour, in this particular case of Judas, did penance, so to speak, and made atoning satisfaction for those sins out of the circuit of judicial or public animadversion, which men commit when they strive to deceive each other under a false show of tenderness, regard, or friendship?

5. How greatly ought we to admire, how astonished ought we to be at the gentleness and graciousness which Jesus manifests towards Judas, even when in the very act of committing his fiendish crime of most black and ungrateful treachery ! But with what wonder must we also be filled at the callousness of this wretch !

6. It would be conducive to my advancement in christian practice, if I were more frequently to ask my heart—for example, when I visit the house of God—wherefore am I come hither ?

#### VIII. THE DEFENCE MADE BY THE DISCIPLES IN BEHALF OF JESUS AGAINST THE JEWISH BAND.

THE disciples now beheld their great preceptor and leader in the hands of his cruel opponents. This spectacle must have been insufferable to them, especially when they considered with what barbarity he would undoubtedly be treated. How little courage soever they possessed of themselves to oppose force with force, yet the miracle which they had so lately seen, appears to have inspired them with such a degree of boldness, that they at once resolved to attempt the rescue of Christ by strength of arm. They asked, however, in the mean time, permission to this end from Jesus, and desired that they might be allowed to rush upon the assailants with their weapons. But the impetuous Peter had not patience enough to wait the Redeemer's answer. In the first heat of his indignation, he drew his sword, and striking at one Malchus, a servant of the high priest, who showed himself, perhaps, more

zealous and officious than the rest to seize Jesus, cut off his right ear.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. How detrimental may the warmth of my temper become to me if I endeavour not to moderate it by reason and religion !

2. It is never advisable in the first glow of passion to abandon ourselves to that course of action to which we feel ourselves the most impelled.

3. Even the best-meant intentions can never warrant or excuse a violent and illegal mode of conduct.

4. Let the inconsiderate zeal of Peter teach me that prudence and circumspection which I am bound to observe even in the defence of the best of all causes—that of religion.

IX. THE BEHAVIOUR OF JESUS ON THE OCCASION OF  
PETER'S RASH ACT OF VIOLENCE.

HOWEVER upright and laudable in itself the mere object of Peter might have been in the enterprise just related, yet the actual deed cannot be approved, as it was entirely opposite to all the sentiments and doctrines which Jesus had so often impressed upon the hearts and understandings of his disciples. Our Lord, therefore, intimated his displeasure to Peter in regard to it, and checked his zeal in the ensuing terms: “Put up again thy sword into his place, for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword ;” or, with a slight alteration of expression, “Knowest thou not,

that whosoever has recourse to the use of arms without a lawful calling to that end, or without being justified by the occasion, which is the same, shall be destroyed by the like violent means: sheathe, then, thy sword again, for here thou hast no command to fight, and thy valour is inconsistent and ill-timed. 'Think-est thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it shall be? Shall I not drink the cup which my Father has given me? Shall I refuse to undergo the sufferings which my Father has appointed to me? Moreover, except all these things take place, the prophecies cannot be accomplished. Therefore I charge you all, my beloved disciples! 'suffer ye thus far,' refraining from all opposition." But to prove more evidently, had that been requisite, how humanely his heart was disposed, and how great the power was which he possessed, he touched the ear of the wounded man, which apparently still continued hanging by the extremity; and it was healed the same moment.

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. I see from the example of Jesus what mildness and indulgence I am to use towards such persons as, through prejudice or rashness, have been led into failings not wholly incompatible with an uncorrupted heart.

2. To oppose legal authority, supposing even that it is done in the furtherance or defence of a good cause, is an unwarrantable and forbidden act of culpable officiousness and criminal zeal.

3. Our Saviour had the salvation of sinners more at heart than his own personal security or ease. For

though he possessed all the means of setting himself at liberty, which omnipotence can confer, he never thought of employing them, his whole study being to fulfil the design of his coming into the world.

4. Under all circumstances Jesus calmed his mind with the idea of the will of God. This was with him the strongest motive to shun no suffering that might come upon him.

5. What Jesus had formerly taught he now practised himself—he did good to his injurer.

6. The proofs of divine majesty which Jesus from time to time displayed in the very midst of his afflictions, are sufficient to convince me, in the most forcible manner, that this great sufferer was the only-begotten Son of God.

#### X. CHRIST'S ADDRESS TO THE ARMED BAND.

As soon as he now saw that the fierce rage of his enemies, who had been still more violently exasperated by the intemperance of Peter, was a little allayed through the extraordinary instance of moderation and benevolence which the miraculous cure of the wounded servant exhibited, he turned his discourse to the whole band arrayed against him, directing his speech, however, chiefly to the high priests, to the captains of the temple, and to the elders of the people. For the vehemence of passion, and the desire that an enterprise in which they placed so much account might prove successful, had such an extreme influence over the otherwise proud spirits of these men, that they were here mixed

with the lowest of the rabble. The tenor of Christ's address on the present occasion was to this effect: " 'Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me?' Was it needful that ye should thus fall upon me, with a large body of armed men, and with weapons of all kinds, and lights and torches, as if ye sought to seize a robber surrounded by his audacious and desperate gang of comrades, or, as if ye were apprehensive of meeting from me or mine the most determined and sanguinary resistance? 'I was daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.' How was it, I say, that ye then made no attempt to take me captive, nor so much as stretched out a finger against me? 'All this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.' Ye could not, however much ye desired to do the contrary, act in any other manner than ye have done. For the time of my sufferings was not yet arrived, and that mighty power which sets the machinations of men at nought ruled over you with uncontrollable force. 'But this is your hour, and the hour of darkness.' Now is the hour come for which you have long so anxiously waited—the hour in which, out of infatuated blindness, ye are to exercise your malicious wickedness upon me to its full extent, and open an unconfined scope to your stifled hatred. Yet think not that ye behave in this according to your own arbitrary will and free inclination only. Every thing that shall happen to me is appointed by a higher decree, by infinite wisdom, and occurs for the accomplishment of those events which the ancient writers of the Old Testament have foretold concerning the sufferings which I am called to bear." This mild, though ingenuous and striking discourse, made, however, so little impression upon the hearts of the persecutors of Jesus,



that, as soon as it was ended, they lost no time in putting him in bonds and leading him away, as they had been commanded.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. The sacred duty to which Jesus had devoted himself during his whole residence on the earth, that of working upon the souls of men, this duty he still practises under his calamities. Oh! may I become, both in good and evil times, thus edifying through my conduct!

2. Let what will befall me, I know that it takes place through the wise and beneficent ordinances of God.

3. The moment at which any trouble shall overtake me is exactly fixed by the will and goodness of God. Before that destined moment no such misfortune can reach me.

4. Even the most iniquitous actions must at last conduce to the accomplishment of God's decrees for universal good and the advancement of righteousness.

5. Through the captivity of Jesus, my lawless freedom is atoned, and all ill-treatment of his members sanctified to them.

XI. THE FLIGHT OF THE DISCIPLES.

At the sight of their Master in bonds, the disciples suddenly lost all courage. They represented to themselves, it may well be concluded, the cruel fate which they had to expect in the absence of their Chief. But they seem not equally to have remembered that protec-

tion which Christ had so often, and even indeed only a few minutes before, promised to grant to them. "They all forsook him and fled," abandoning their Benefactor and Lord to the power of his enemies. One young man alone had still the boldness to follow Jesus. This person, perhaps, lived in the neighbourhood of Gethsamene, and had been awaked out of his sleep by the nocturnal tumult. He had thus only a linen cloth, probably a thin night-garment cast over his naked body, but being curious to learn the sequel of the affair, loitered, at a short distance, behind the divine prisoner. The soldiers, however, who may have deemed him to be a spy, happening to observe him, caught hold of him, and endeavoured to take him. But the youth leaving the linen cloth, which they had grasped in their attempt to arrest him, in their hands, fled from them naked.

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. How inconstant, deceitful, and uncertain, are the resolutions even of the best of men ! How easily can a yet remote evil damp, by anticipation, their magnanimity !

2. Our own weakness is often unknown to us till we are called upon to show our strength.

3. Jesus is, in all respects, a tried and approved high priest. The unfaithfulness and the fickleness of his friends, which he had to experience in so high a degree, may well keep me, under a similar destiny, dauntless.

4. How often have I been already faithless to my Saviour, when an arrogant reliance in my own firmness, or carnal prejudices, or unbelief mastered my heart !

## XII. JESUS CARRIED BEFORE THE SACERDOTAL COURT.

THE soldiers and officers in whose custody Jesus was thus placed led him first to a Jew of great distinction named Annas. This man was not, indeed, himself invested with the dignity of high-priest, but, as he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who actually held the office alluded to at this time; and always maintained a strong influence in public concerns, it had therefore been previously concerted, that the Redeemer should be presented to him immediately after his apprehension. In the meantime, the members of the high council had assembled in the palace of Caiaphas. Now this Caiaphas was he who had lately cried out with so much intemperance, in a public meeting, to his Jewish brethren, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." The mention of this memorable speech must ever excite, not only on account of its own appalling atrocity, but for a yet more striking reason, a strong sensation in the christian mind. For, though it is true that Caiaphas meant to express by this remark a maxim suggested to him by his perverted principles of political policy, yet, through an especial decree of God, it was so ordered, that his declaration, literally interpreted, contained a prophetic annunciation of the mediatorial death of Christ. 'And though he spake not of himself; but being high-priest that year, he prophesied, that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.' As soon as the number of the council was

complete, Jesus was taken from the house of Annas to the residence of the high-priest.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. If there even existed no grounds of a more weighty and significant nature to place the innocence of Jesus beyond all doubt, this one circumstance alone would be highly prepossessing and favourable for his cause, that his judges were partial and evil-minded persons.

2. Necessary though it confessedly is to promote as much as possible the good of one's people, still it always remains a most reprehensible line of conduct to employ unlawful, or individually injurious means for that end.

3. Even the ungodly must often against their will and intention become the instruments of our felicity in God.

4. The decrees of God triumph over all the counsels and determinations of men.

XIII. PETER'S FIRST DENIAL OF JESUS.

PETER had immediately, as soon as Jesus was taken, joined in the flight of the rest of the disciples. But suddenly, as it would appear, recollecting his recent protestations, with re-awakened love for Jesus, new courage also sprang up in his heart. He, therefore, followed the guard, that conducted Christ from Annas to the palace of Caiaphas, though afar off. Another disciple, most probably John, likewise accompanied him. But as this disciple was known to the

high-priest, or had at least some acquaintance in his household, he went in with Jesus into the palace. Seeing, however, that Peter did not dare to come in after him, he returned back and spoke with the portress, that she might admit his friend too. On this intercession the desired permission was granted to Peter. As he entered, this damsel, who kept the door, looked at him earnestly in the face, and said to him, "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" Peter answered, "I am not." He then, without advancing farther, remained in the vestibule or hall of the palace. Here the servants and officers of justice had made a fire, for the night was particularly cold; and were warming themselves. Peter stationed himself among them partly to enjoy the benefit of the heat, and partly the better to learn what turn the affair was likely to take. As he stood here the maid again stedfastly regarded him, and perhaps because she observed as well on his countenance as in his whole behaviour a certain degree of confusion and timidity, she said to him a second time, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth." But he denied it before them all, exclaiming, "'Woman! I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest: I cannot possibly conceive what has induced thee thus to question me, nor what it is thou meanest to infer."

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. When we resolve to follow Jesus, we must hold ourselves prepared for all the difficulties and obstacles which we may possibly have to encounter.
2. That which succeeds according to our inconsiderate wishes becomes often a cause of our unhappiness and destruction.

3. Intercourse with the bad can often make the strongest virtue better, and the most sincere resolutions retrogressive and faithless.

4. Every trifle may be dangerous for our hearts, if God preserves us not from temptation.

5. Let no one think that he stands so fast, that he cannot fall.

#### XIV. THE FIRST EXAMINATION OF JESUS BEFORE THE SACERDOTAL COURT.

WHILE Peter was behaving in the faithless manner just described, Jesus evinced in the judicial examination, to which he was subjected before the high council, the most undaunted candour. Caiaphas, who, on the former consultations, had acted with so much zeal against Christ, took also the lead on the present occasion. He opened the investigation by interrogating Jesus in regard to the disciples whom he had adopted, and the doctrines which he had disseminated. For the high priest thought, that the answer of the Saviour to these questions would of necessity prove of such a nature, as at least to enable him and his colleagues with some appearance of justice to bring an accusation against the Redeemer. But the wisdom of Jesus frustrated this design of wickedness. "I spake," answered Jesus, "openly to the world. I announced my doctrines publicly and without reserve to the people. 'I did not shun the most frequented places of the city, but appeared in them and preached in them. I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret I have said no-

thing.' Even the particular instruction, which I have given to my disciples, differs not in the least in many of its internal points from that which I gave in general to all men in your wonted assemblies. But how camest thou to put this question to me? Why dost thou not rather bring forward against me the charge, on account of which thou hast caused me to be apprehended? Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. If thy object be really to sift out the truth in this matter, then inquire of all, or of any of my hearers, whom you seem best, what it was that I spoke to them. From them thou wilt acquire the most satisfactory information. Even in this meeting there must be many, who cannot be ignorant of the tenor of my teaching either in public or in private." As Jesus finished these words one of the officers of the court, who stood near him, struck him with the palm of his hand in the face, crying out, " ' Answerest thou the high-priest so? " Is that, audacious man! a proper reply to return to a reverend dignitary of such high authority and note." This violent insult put upon him by a vile bondman, Jesus bore with the most unruffled patience; and contented himself with merely saying, as this action was in every respect illegal, " ' If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me? ' If I have said aught false or unbecoming, show proof, and convict me of my crime: but if I have said nothing amiss, why dost thou strike me? "

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. How difficult it is in regard to the defence of the truth, to avoid being misled, on the one hand into a

blind zeal, and on the other, into a timorous backwardness!

2. It is a very common thing to attach evil suspicions to innocent actions.

3. A good conscience is the sole source of real candour and openness of temper.

4. He, who does evil, is afraid of the light: but they that speak the truth, and do well, need not be afraid to make their words and works manifest.

5. The patience of Jesus under the ignominy which he endured is the most evident fulfilment of the precepts which he imparted to his disciples.

6. From the conduct of Jesus it clearly appears, that it is by no means forbidden publicly to assert our injured honour, in a rational and lawful manner.

#### XV. THE DEPOSITION OF THE FALSE WITNESSES AGAINST JESUS.

ALL the preconcerted attacks of his enemies being thus frustrated by the method of defence which Jesus had adopted, new means were now devised to carry into execution their murderous plan against the life of the Saviour of mankind. The chief priests, the elders, and the whole council, sought therefore to procure false witnesses to support their cause. And several persons were actually found, who were willing to give a perjured evidence; but their depositions were of no avail in promoting the object in view; being partly of too little weight to admit a sentence of death to be founded upon them with any semblance of equity, and partly

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contradictory and inconsistent, while the very contrary of this discrepancy the law of the land, according to which, they desired, at least externally, to appear to act, imperatively required. At last, however, two witnesses rose up against Christ, whose declarations seemed to be of more importance. The one asserted, that Jesus had said, “ ‘ I will destroy this temple, that is made with hands; and within three days, I will build another made without hands.’ ” And the second swore, “ ‘ This fellow,’ ” blasphemously pointing to Jesus,—boasted “ ‘ I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.’ ” These testimonies, in themselves untrue, were, however, the more unserviceable, as they did not even so much as agree in terms. Nor did Jesus vouchsafe the least reply to the allegations here deposed, which indeed confuted each other.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. What pain must this flagitious criminality on the part of his persecutors have occasioned to Jesus, as the name of God was so abominably vilified and profaned through it!

2. How holy must have been the life and how spotless the innocence of Jesus, since no creditable witness could be found among all his traducers and enviers, to lay any thing to his charge!

3. Innocence itself cannot remain secure from calumnies. Among all those to whom the nature of man belongs, there is not one so righteous, that he may not be aspersed, and overclouded with the shade of guilt, by false witnesses.

4. Silence is in some cases the best defence of accused innocence, one of the surest proofs of the tran-

quillity of the mind, and the most efficacious means of correcting our traducer or our enemy, and putting him to shame.

5. It is the character of an upright heart to bear slanders, abuse, and unjust accusations with a composed and calm frame of mind.

6. Since it cost my Saviour so much to atone for this particular species of transgression, I will detest from my soul all lies of every kind, and never seek to injure my neighbour by slanders.

7. Should I ever, without its being in any particular degree my own fault, fall under similar circumstances, the remembrance of this peculiar suffering of my Saviour must raise my flagging confidence, and inspire me with sentiments, if possible, like to his. .

#### XVI. THE FRANK AND INGENUOUS AVOWAL OF JESUS BEFORE THE COUNCIL.

NOTWITHSTANDING the weakness and insignificancy of the testimonies alleged against Jesus, the high-priest seemed to consider them as conclusive and quite sufficient for his purpose. For as soon as the last speaker ended his evidence, he rose from his seat, as was customary, when a witness repeated a blasphemy imputed to any impeached individual, and exclaimed to Christ, "Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?" But Jesus still returned no reply to the high priest. Full of indignation at such continued silence, Caiaphas again questioning him with new impatience, thus spoke to him; "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be

the Christ, the son of God :’ whether thou be verily the Messiah, and therefore the only-begotten of the Most High.” To this interrogation, as it concerned his divine mission, Jesus held it his duty to give a plain and definite reply ; and consequently answered, “ ‘ Thou hast said it’ exactly. ‘ I am’ the Messiah, and the Son of the Most High and blessed God. ‘ Nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.’ Yea, I moreover assure you, that ye shall see many events fully adequate to convince you, that I have placed myself at the right hand of Omnipotence, and still more incontestably will ye then perceive it, when I shall come on the clouds of heaven to hold judgment over you.”

*Practical Inferences.*

1. How detestable are those who feign to be interested and engaged in the discovery and research of truth, while they are only thinking how best to promote and accomplish their own villanous designs under the cloak of virtue !

2. What duty can be sacred to those who dread not to violate in the most impious manner the name of the living God ?

3. I am bound openly to profess Jesus and his doctrine at all times when my silence might in any way be looked upon as a denial of the truth, or prove a source of error or offence to my brethren.

4. How consolatory for me is the conviction, that Jesus was the promised Saviour of the world !

5. Nothing can be conceived more frightful than the situation in which the scorers of Jesus will find themselves at his coming to judgment.

## XVII. THE CONDEMNATION OF JESUS BY THE HIGH COUNCIL.

THE high priest rejoiced in his heart, that he had elicited the above-stated confession from Jesus, believing that it afforded to him a suitable occasion and pretext to pronounce a sentence of condemnation upon his persecuted prisoner. With hypocritical zeal, therefore, he instantly rent his clothes, according to the custom common among the Jews, to show that he considered the declaration of Christ to be an infamous profanation of the name and honour of the Lord, and at the same time passionately exclaimed, “ ‘ He has spoken blasphemy, what farther need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.’ Out of his own mouth ye have learned his mockery of the Most High. What think ye? Have we not now ground enough to adjudge to him the punishment of death?”—All the members of the council who were present then answered unanimously, “ He is guilty of death.”

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Even the most venerable customs are converted by ungodly men into a covering for hypocrisy and deceit; and serve indeed only too often to the furtherance and facility of their crimes.

2. Into what acts of unrighteousness are judges led, who only follow their passions, their carnal inclinations, and their worldly views!

3. This circumstance also in the afflictions of Jesus is a part of his sufferings of reconciliation, through which he was pleased to atone for the sins of blasphemy and injustice.

XVIII. THE OUTRAGES COMMITTED UPON JESUS BY  
THE JEWS.

As soon as the sentence of death was pronounced against Jesus, they brought him out of the council-chamber to an open place beside the high priest's palace, and delivered him to the officers who were to keep guard over him. These hard-hearted men judging, according to their inhuman way of thinking, that a criminal ordered to death, and so universally despised, deserved no compassion, exercised all the wantonness of their barbarity upon him. 'They did spit in his face, and buffeted him, and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.' Nay, even their staves were not left unemployed, and, in order to heap up to the brim the measure of his sufferings, pain, and degradation, having first covered his eyes, they cried to him at every stroke with a taunting voice " 'Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?' " Yet these were not the only taunts with which they insulted him: they vented their malice against him in other reviling speeches and blasphemies.

*Practical Inferences.*

1.. The great multitude are ever wont in their conduct to act more after the example of the higher ranks, than according to the principles of reason and religion.

2. To what a state of humiliation was my Saviour reduced! But it was on account of my sins that his countenance was so disfigured by contumelious outrage.

3. If my Saviour had to endure so much disgrace, how can I recoil at any species of ignominy that may

possibly attach itself to me, in consequence of my profession of the name and worship of Christ?

4. Jesus submitted, without contradiction, to the spite and scorn of his foes. Ought not I, then, to exercise patience and meekness under the little injuries which are done to me?

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#### XIX. PETER'S SECOND DENIAL OF CHRIST.

SOON after his having denied Jesus for the first time, Peter retired from the fire, at which he had been standing, and slunk to the door of the porch, in order wholly to avoid so dangerous a station as his late warming-place had proved to him. Just as he came to the door the cock crew. Here he, however, found himself again in the greatest perplexity; for he saw that the door was shut, and he durst not venture to beg any one to open it. At length, therefore, he considered it best to return back to the spot which he had so recently left. Scarcely had he done so when the portress, who had before so sharply put him to the test, again observing him, remarked, with strong emphasis, to the company seated about the fire, “‘This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.’ I cannot possibly help still retaining my former opinion, that this man must be one of those who kept with Christ.” In which idea, another damsel in the high-priest’s service coincided with her. The servants of the court began then to regard him more narrowly, and said to him in turn; “‘Art not thou also one of his disciples?’ Surely that which the maid asserts is the truth: thou art one of

them that adhered to Jesus." Peter again contradicted the imputation, and repeated his previous declaration, "'I am not.' You mistake me for another person: 'I do not know the man.'" And in order to make this lie more credible, he confirmed it with an oath by the living God!

*Practical Inferences.*

1. The flesh wars against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.

2. Into what embarrassment, uneasiness and care does he plunge himself, who permits sin, even in a single instance, to rule over him!

3. The longer I sin the farther I remove from Jesus, and the more closely I approach to my own destruction. How perilous is it, therefore, for me, if I do not withstand the first instigations of vice!

4. Pride and rashness are generally the precursors of great falls through sin.

XX. PETER'S THIRD DENIAL.

ABOUT the space of an hour had elapsed since the second recurrence of Peter's abnegation of his Master, when one of the bystanders turned to him again, and said in his face, "'Thou art also of them.'" But Peter still denied, and protested "'I am not.'" Another then reiterated the charge, and added, "'Surely thou also art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee.'" Again a third, in particular, confidently affirmed the same fact, crying out, "'Of a truth this fellow was also with

them, for he is a Galilean ; his speech agreeth thereto.'” To which Peter rejoined, “ ‘ Man, I know not what thou sayest.’ ” The trials of the poor backslider were not, however, to finish here. A servant of the high-priest, who was also a kinsman of that Malchus whose ear Peter had severed with his sword, immediately exclaimed, “ ‘ Did I not see thee in the garden with him ? ’ ” This fresh attack put the confronted falsifier quite beside himself. He now began to curse and to swear, uttering the most vehement imprecations, vowing that if it were so, he would renounce all share in the community of the Jews, and solemnly declaring again and again, “ ‘ I know not the man of whom ye speak.’ ”

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Small as the commencement of a sin often is, or at least seems to be, to what a frightful magnitude may it not proceed if no opposition be made to its growth !
2. For the perpetration of crime a short period is required. In order to become a saint a long space of time and much exercise are needful, but to become a villain even a few minutes are enough.
3. A thousand circumstances often unite to frustrate our best-devised plans in the commission of wicked deeds.
4. God makes use of many ways to place the transgression of the sinner before his eyes.
5. How tormenting is a bad conscience, that must make its possessor tremble at the sight of every new face, and at the rustle of every leaf !



## XXI. PETER'S PENITENCE.

SCARCELY had Peter spoken the words quoted in the preceding account, when the second crowing of the cock pealed in his ears. Jesus, who still continued under the insults and barbarous treatment of the savage officers of the judicial authorities, turned round and cast a look of mingled love and pity at his frail disciple. This look produced the strongest impression upon the heart of Peter. He remembered the ominous words which Jesus had addressed to him, " ' Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice ! ' " And he immediately hurried from a place thus fatal to him, and wrapping himself round in his upper garments, from a strong sense of shame, and the most poignant sensations of remorse, hid himself in solitude, and gave way to a flood of bitter tears.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. How many motives to repentance has not the Lord displayed to me, and inspired me with, from my youth upwards ! Oh ! would that I had turned them to profit as uprightly as Peter did !

2. Inexpressibly great is the love of Jesus for sinners, since even at the moment when his own distresses were so manifold, he was mindful of the fallen Peter.

3. It is a sure prognostic of an amended heart when we feel not only a detestation for our wonted sins, but a strong aversion also for those places where we have been led into transgression.

4. Reflection upon our vices, and the examination of the state of our hearts, require a total separation

from all the distractions of society, and the still calmness of solitary retirement.

5. The first impression which the lively perception or full discovery of our sins has made upon our hearts must remain in all its vigour to the end.

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#### XXII. JESUS AGAIN EXAMINED BY THE HIGH COUNCIL.

ALL the events hitherto recorded had occurred before midnight. But the passing of the sentence of death upon Jesus was now immediately followed by the breaking up of the council and the delivery of the Redeemer, as related, into the custody of the officers. With the break of day, however, the elders of the people, and the scribes, and the chief priests, came again together, and assembled, as in the past night, in the palace of Caiaphas. The present deliberation had for its chief, or rather exclusive object, how they might most conveniently carry into effect the judgment pronounced in their prior meeting. This purpose they sought, at the same time, carefully to conceal, and externally so to act as if the investigation of the truth were their sole aim. Jesus was, therefore, brought once more before their assembly. And the high priest again, in the name of the whole council, repeated the question, “ ‘ Art thou the Christ ? tell us.’ ” To which query Jesus, with his accustomed majestic mildness, replied, “ If I tell you, as I have already done, ‘ ye will not believe.’ And though I were willing to convince you by the strongest proofs, ye would not enter

into any impartial examination of the fact. ‘And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go.’ Of what avail, then, would all my demonstrations be, since ye have already resolved not to set me at liberty, however undeniably I might prove the veracity of my avowal? But of this I once more assure you: ‘hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God:’ henceforth, from this time, I shall be exalted at the right hand of the throne of the Omnipotent.” Here the inquisitors of Jesus exclaimed altogether, “Art thou, then, the Son of God?” And Jesus answered, “‘Ye say that I am;’ and ye say right: I am he.” This second confession was of course pretended to be considered as a strong confirmation of the legality and expediency of the sentence of the past night. “‘What need,’ exclaimed these unjust judges, in their former tone and words, ‘have we of any farther witness? For we ourselves have heard of his own mouth:’ he himself has spoken his own condemnation: ‘he is guilty of death!’”

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. Minds once hardened and prejudiced against the truth allow no room for better conviction.

2. The advent of Christ for judgment over the Jews, which to our salvation has been so gloriously accomplished, and his future coming, with all certainty to be expected, for the universal judgment of us all, are incontrovertible proofs that he is the only-begotten Son of God.

3. I will carefully beware, through the assistance of God, of having an evil-disposed, unbelieving heart.

4. How many in our days also render themselves guilty of the same crime against Jesus, which we here

see the Jews committing against the only true Messiah !

5. Jesus had devoted his whole life to convince the Jews that he was the real Christ, the promised Saviour, and no other, and consequently the Son of God : how much must, therefore, their incredulity, turning them, as it were, actually into monsters, have distressed his holy, gentle spirit !

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#### XXIII. JESUS DELIVERED OVER TO PILATE.

FULL of self-complacency and joy at the supposed success of their base plot, the whole assembly now arose again, ordered Jesus to be bound anew, and led him to the residence of the Roman governor,—the members of the high council being afraid to cause him to be executed of their own sole authority. It seemed to them more advisable to cast the odium of this act, as far as possible, upon their foreign masters ; and thus, at the same time, to prevent all the uproar and rebellious attempts among the people, which would inevitably have ensued, if they, of their own unsupported accord, had carried into force the preconcerted death, or rather murder, of Christ : it was hence determined to deliver over the condemned prisoner to the Roman magistracy. For a considerable time past, a particular ruler had been placed over the Jewish land, who was subject, however, to the provincial governor of Syria : this post was at present filled, in the country of Judea, by a certain Pontius Pilate, a man who rendered himself, through

his tyrannical principles and conduct, hateful to the whole Jewish people: but, notwithstanding this, the enmity of the priests and chiefs of the Israelites towards Jesus, and their unquenchable thirst of blood, had sufficient power over them to induce them to submit an affair, in which their so highly-prized and exclusive religion itself was concerned, to the investigation and decision of a heathen.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. It is a very ancient trick of state policy to make use of the secular arm for the persecution of Jesus and his followers.

2. The hypocritical and the superstitious consider injustice, unrighteousness, and wickedness of every kind, as things of no importance, when they view them in connexion with the success of their impostures, and the maintenance and observance of their favourite religious services and ceremonies.

3. How often already, on subsequent occasions, has the religion of Jesus been sacrificed to national interests, and a perverse political system of state-expediency !

4. The divine Providence, by which all the events and concerns of the world are regulated and swayed, even in the temporary permission of flagitious enterprises, is all-powerful to accomplish its own designs of good.

5. The delivery of Jesus into the power and jurisdiction of the heathens may convince me of the universality of his mediatorial death, and of the fruits of his redemption.

## XXIV. THE DESPAIR OF JUDAS.

JUDAS had hitherto, it may be imagined, indulged the constant hope, that Jesus would snatch himself out of the grasp of his enemies ; but when he found that a sentence of death had been pronounced upon him, and that, for the completion of this judgment, he had been already delivered over to Pilate, he repented of the act which he had committed for the sake of so infamous a gain : he hastened, therefore, in the violence of his remorse, to carry back to the chief priests and elders the thirty pieces that had been paid to him, and, doing so, thus addressed them : “ ‘ I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood,’ and brought a guiltless person to a cruel and unworthy death : take back, therefore, your silver, the wages of my perdition.” But this confession, wrung by contrition from the betrayer’s bosom, so little affected them, that they only replied, “ ‘ What is that to us ? see thou to that.’ ” Such a reception tended yet more to augment the anguish of Judas ; and, in order to rid himself of the money received in this nefarious transaction, which he looked upon as the origin of his flagrant crime, he cast it down in the inner porch of the temple. But even this atonement was unavailing, and failed to tranquillize his upbraiding conscience : he fled soon afterwards, like one possessed of many demons, to a lonely spot, and there he hanged himself : ‘ And falling down headlong, he fell asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.’ The high-priests having, in the mean while, taken up the restored bribe, consulted together as to the use which they ought to make of it : they

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did not hold it lawful to place it in the treasury, because it was blood-money, and the price of life: they therefore, after some farther deliberation, bought with this sum a piece of ground, which had before been probably abandoned to the potters for the digging out of clay; and made a decree, that it should serve as a burying-place for such heathens as might die in Jerusalem: hence, this field was long afterwards known by the name of the field of blood, or, according to the Syrian language, Aceldema. Thus was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, ‘And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potters’ field, as the Lord appointed.’

*Practical Inferences.*

1. If men would only review the frightful consequences likely to follow their sins, they would not so easily resolve upon the commission even of the slightest fault, as they otherwise do upon that of deeds of the utmost turpitude.

2. Our want of foresight will not hereafter serve us as an excuse, if our iniquities draw after them worse results than we anticipated.

3. How unhappy am I, if, when my conscience awakes out of its slumber, I then, for the first time, behold before my eyes the wretched effects of my sinfulness!

4. By deferring my conversion, and by slighting the patience and the goodness of God, I am sure to plunge myself into misery: every day, therefore, will I give earnest heed to my salvation.

5. Without repentance it is impossible to have faith,

and without faith it is impossible to obtain the forgiveness of God.

6. The participators in our misdeeds can grant us no consolation under the mental distress and anguish arising from them.

7. The tortures of an unreconciled conscience are insupportable, and drive the sinner, without the aid of the divine grace, and the support of the Most High, to irremediable destruction and endless despair.

#### XXV. CHRIST ACCUSED BEFORE PILATE.

IT was still very early in the morning, when the Jews arrived with Jesus at the palace of the governor. They did not, however, themselves enter the hall of judgment; for they thought that they would be defiled, if they should go into the house of one of the uncircumcised; especially as there happened to be many Pharisees among them, who purposed that evening to eat the passover. The members, therefore, of the council of the high-priest entreated that Pilate would come out to them: he complied with their wishes, and appeared before them in front of his residence. The first words which he then spoke to them were these: "What accusation bring ye against this man?" This question so much the more surprised the Jews, as they were well aware that Pilate had been already sufficiently informed, through their own means, that Jesus was a person dangerous to the state: they accordingly returned to him the following arrogant answer: "If he were not a malefactor, we



would not have delivered him up unto thee.' Surely we are conscientious enough not to bring a man to thee, that the punishment of death may be inflicted upon him, who is not deserving of that fate." Pilate then replied, "' Take ye him and judge him according to your law.' If the case be as ye say, ye had best away with him to punishment agreeably to your own national ordinances." To this the Jews objected: "' It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.' " In consequence of the perseverance of the Jews in thus insisting that Pilate should enforce the sentence passed upon Jesus, the saying of our Saviour himself was fulfilled, through which he had repeatedly announced by what sort of death he should die. For if the Jews had been themselves the sole instruments of his premature end, being by them declared to be a false prophet and a misleader of the people, he would in pursuance of their custom have been stoned to death. But as he was to be executed under the Roman authority, crucifixion was destined to him. Nevertheless, the Jews saw plainly, that Pilate would not command the execution of Jesus without some apparent cause, nor till a legal examination or trial had taken place. They now began, therefore, to bring forward their stronger and more regular charges, crying out with their usual violence and falsehood, " We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ, a king."

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. How abominable is the hypocrite, who, while he studiously observes all the ordinances of man, transgresses, without compunction, the laws and precepts of God!

2. If, notwithstanding all the good services which I may have done to the world, I should still be considered or treated as a malefactor, let it be my consolation, that the most beneficent friend that the human race ever possessed, the friend too of all mankind without exception, had to endure the same lot in a far harsher and far more unmerited degree.

3. Even the manner and attendant circumstances of my death are determined by God. Whether I shall die on a sick bed, or in any other manner, has been already provided for beforehand by my heavenly Father.

4. It conduces much to the confirmation of my faith, that I see how, in all the events of the life of Jesus, a wise Providence has invariably ordained every thing.

5. The more shameless and flagitious the accusations against Jesus were, the more manifest is his innocence.

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#### XXVI. JESUS' CONFESSION TO PILATE.

AFTER the Jews had finished their accusations, Pilate went back into the palace, and entered into an examination of Jesus, to learn, if possible, whether he were guilty of high treason. “‘ Art thou,” said Pilate, commencing his interrogations, “‘ the king of the Jews ?” Jesus replied by another question in the following terms: “‘ Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee ?” Hast thou seen aught in my person or my conduct, that could lead thee to the supposition that I am a king; or dost thou put this inquiry to

me, merely because the Jewish council have laid this to my charge?" Pilate with evident displeasure rejoined, "'Am I a Jew, that I should trouble myself with such matters? Thy own nation and the chief priests too have delivered thee unto me.' This is enough for me. What hast thou done?" Jesus answered, "It is true I am a king. 'My kingdom,' however, 'is not of this world;' nor does it partake in aught of the nature and condition of terrestrial kingdoms. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now is my kingdom not from hence. Were my dominion of an earthly kind, I should have collected around me valiant and powerful adherents, and these would have striven and resisted to the utmost, that I might not have thus become captive to my enemies." The open boldness of this confession induced Pilate again to repeat, "'Art thou a king, then?'" To this reiterated demand Jesus now made reply: "'Thou sayest,' that I am a king. 'To this end I was born, and for this cause came into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.'" Pilate, struck with this speech, hastily rejoined, "'What is truth?'"

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. Jesus, in his state of debasement, showed reverence to the magistracy. In this he has left a pattern to his followers, that, even under the most unmerited oppressions, they must not refuse obedience to the legal authorities.

2. Let the noble and upright avowal of Jesus before Pilate encourage me to acknowledge the name of Christ, in the face of the whole world, even when I have

the best cause to be assured, that this profession will bring upon me ridicule, or torture, or, it may be, death itself.

3. The best acknowledgment of Christ consists in the practice of truth and integrity.

4. The world knows not the great superiority and advantages possessed by true christians, above the rest of mankind. In its eyes the children of God are miserable creatures, and all the privileges and prerogatives which religion assigns to them ludicrous and despicable.

5. Even with the best and most conscientious conduct we cannot always escape the abuse and slander of the multitude. But well it is for me, if the witness of my innocence be in heaven.

6. That the kingdom of Jesus is not of this world is a thought that should comfort me, amid the numerous disappointments, and the various calamities of which life is full : it should also prevent me from eagerly pursuing terrestrial benefits and temporal felicity.

7. No one can with right regard himself as a subject of Christ who does not seek to learn the truths of the gospel, and in all his actions to conform to them.

8. The world scoffs at that which it knows not. It despises religion, because it can neither feel nor comprehend the vast importance of this institution both for the present time and for eternity.

#### XXVII. PILATE'S TESTIMONY TO THE INNOCENCE OF JESUS.

PILATE, without waiting for the answer of Jesus to his question, 'What is truth?' went again out of the

judgment-hall, and said to the Jews who stood without, anxiously expecting him, “‘ I find in him no fault at all.’ I have examined him, and declare him to be guiltless of the crime which ye impute to him.” But this impartial acquittal from the lips of a heathen judge made no beneficial impression upon the blood-thirsty persecutors of Christ. On the contrary, they began to renew their charges with more vehemence than before, and to use every exertion in their power to give colour to their accusations. Jesus listened to their reproaches with his accustomed earnestness and composure, but he did not deem them of moment enough to notice them by words. Pilate more than once required Jesus to defend himself against the criminations of his countrymen. And as Jesus still continued to observe the same unmoved and dignified silence, the Roman magistrate at last cried out to him, “ Answerest thou nothing? Behold how many things thy witness against thee?” But Jesus still held his peace, so that Pilate marvelled with much astonishment.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Pilate is an instance of those men who regard the most momentous truths with indifference, and will not give themselves the trouble to reflect upon them, to investigate them, or to convince themselves of their validity or the contrary.

2. Hardened and obdurate minds, the longer they continue in their perverted state, the more closely are they shut against all ingress to truth.

3. From Jesus I may learn to be silent, when hatred and pride would be fluent in words, and then to speak, when the dread of man is wont so oft to put a lock upon the lips.

4. God often provides for oppressed innocence a support in its persecutions.

5. How important is every testimony to the blamelessness of Jesus for my persuasion, that he is the Son of God!

#### XXVIII. JESUS SENT TO HEROD.

THE Jews fearing, perhaps, that Pilate might be moved to pity, by the calm and composed demeanour which Christ maintained, amid all their accusations and calumnies, redoubled their fierceness, importunately repeating their former impeachment with new violence and impetuosity, and storming Pilate with all the vehemence of bitterly disappointed anger and unsatisfied revenge, “‘ He stirreth up the people,’” cried they, “‘ teaching throughout all Jewry from Galilee to this place.’” Not to any particular spot, nor within any certain bounds, has this impostor and fomentor of rebellion confined his false and traitorous doctrines, but he has filled the whole country and even this city also with them.” The name of Galilee caught the attention of Pilate, and he asked whether the man were a Galilean. Receiving an affirmative answer, and thus finding that Jesus belonged properly to the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, he sent him forthwith to this king, who happened then to be in Jerusalem for the purpose of keeping the passover. Herod had long been desirous of making himself personally acquainted with Jesus, as he had heard a great many extraordinary

things concerning him ; and had even, hitherto, not faintly imagined, that Christ might be John the Baptist, whom he had caused to be beheaded, restored to life. He was not, therefore, a little glad, when he saw his wish at length fulfilled in this manner. He hoped also, that Jesus would work some miracle in his presence, but in this he had wholly deceived himself ; nor could he so much as elicit by any of the numerous questions which he put to the divine object of his frivolous curiosity the slightest reply. The chief priests and scribes, who had followed the Redeemer to the royal residence, ceased not, likewise, before Herod, to multiply and re-echo their former accusations. The king, however, from reasons of state, did not think proper to enter into the merits of these arraignments. Instead of this, Herod and his men of war, his guards, and armed attendants, set Jesus at nought, mocking him and treating him with the most indecent scorn and contempt. Among other insults in ridicule of his kingly dignity, this ruler of the Jews ordered Christ to be clothed in a gorgeous white robe ; and thus arrayed to be carried back to Pilate. On this occasion, Herod and Pilate, who, doubtless from political causes, had long lived in the most violent enmity towards each other, were again reconciled.

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. To what unjust and odious judgments is a teacher of truth and righteousness in particular subjected !
2. An earthly-minded man can feel no true taste for religion.
3. A light-minded disposition is easily led to make sport of the most deserving and praiseworthy objects.
4. Many men become indifferent to the religion of

Jesus, and even oppose and ridicule it, when they perceive that it does not favour their perverse propensities, but is, on the contrary, most repugnant to them.

5. The great ones of the earth are beyond all other persons exposed to the danger of taking offence at the gospel, or, at least, of becoming careless about it.

6. An incredulous and infidel curiosity, and a vain spirit of mockery, are the usual consequences of excessive love for the world.

7. How badly does the carnal world know how to value the true worth of a man ! Should I, then, give the smallest heed to the favourable or adverse opinions of the irreligious portion of society ?

8. Would that I might sustain unmerited contempt with as much composure as Jesus !

9. Even men of the most contrary tempers and mutually hostile dispositions cement friendship together, and become of one mind, when plans are to be concerted or executed against Christ, or against his doctrine and kingdom.

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#### XXIX. PILATE'S EFFORTS TO LIBERATE JESUS.

AFTER Jesus was returned from Herod to Pilate, the latter again summoned the council of the chief priests and elders of the people, and thus addressed them : “ ‘ Ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the people ; and behold I have examined him before you, and have found no fault in this man touching these things whereof ye accuse him : no, nor yet Herod,’ who is attached to your religion. For, causing your prisoner to be carried to that prince, ‘ I



sent you to him,' that ye might make your accusations in his own hearing, 'and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.' Herod has judged him, as I have judged him, every way undeserving of capital punishment. We are both of us of one opinion, that in reference to such a penalty nothing has been committed by him, or proved, or made out, by you against him. I will therefore chastise him, though merely in order to satisfy you, and release him." The Jews were not, however, at all contented with this representation on the part of Pilate, nor with the decision that accompanied it, and the sequel showed that they even had the execution of Jesus more than ever at heart, by their incessantly continuing to urge it with increased clamour. The Roman governor now sought, therefore, by other means to accomplish his desired object in the rescue of Jesus, and by a species of accommodation to terminate the perplexity and difficulty of the question at issue. It had been instituted by the Jews in remembrance of their liberation out of their Egyptian servitude, or from some other reason unknown to us, that a prisoner should be delivered up to the people at the Easter-festival, with the restoration of his liberty, and that the individual to be pardoned should depend upon their own choice. The usual demand had already most likely been made to Pilate, that on the present occasion, as at other similar times, one of the criminals incarcerated should be set at freedom, and he resolved to use this law, if possible, for the saving of the life of Christ. Now there happened, at this moment, to be lying in the common jail, under condemnation of death, a most notorious malefactor named Barabbas, who, together with other heinous transgressions, was accused of having perpetrated mur-

der in a riot. Pilate availing himself therefore of the circumstance related, and trusting to the notorious character of the culprit just named for a prosperous issue to his plan, addressed the crowd assembled round his palace, thus: “ ‘ Ye have a custom that I should release unto you one prisoner at the Passover. Whom will ye that I release unto you, Barabbas or Jesus, which is called Christ ? ’ ” Pilate was instigated by his better feelings to speak and act in this manner, because he well knew that the high priests had accused Jesus only from envy and private hatred. This event was followed by an extraordinary occurrence, which, if any thing could have alarmed their stubborn hearts, might surely have made those concerned in working the destruction of Jesus hesitate in their vicious proceedings. While the Jewish multitude were still dubious what determination to form, and while Pilate yet sat on the judgment-seat waiting for their resolve, his wife sent to him, saying, “ ‘ Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. ’ ”

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. How wonderful is the governance of God ! In order to make manifest the innocence of Jesus, men were overruled to unite together, who in their religious opinions and political views were so dissentient, and otherwise at such sharp variance as Pilate and Herod.

2. It is a perverse manner of acting, to seek, on the one side, to be conscientious, and, on the other, to accommodate ourselves to the sentiments of the world.

3. Mere rational motives can never fully confirm the heart in truth or righteousness. The grace of God alone is able to produce steadfast resolutions.

4. The more obstacles a man finds in the commission of evil, either on the part of others or of his own conscience, the more heavy is his guilt when he nevertheless transgresses.

5. Of what cruelties is anger capable, especially when inflamed by envy !

6. A wicked action is the more abominable the more malicious or flagitious the motives are from which it arises.

7. God takes such measures, in his permission of sin in the world, that it cannot but be evidently seen that he has no share in the crimes of men.

8. It is my duty, so far as lies in my power, to contribute to the safety and rescue of the innocent.

#### XXX. BARABBAS PREFERRED TO JESUS.

THE chief priests and elders took, in the meantime, all the pains they could to move their countrymen by ever kind of excitement to claim Barabbas and to press for the death of Jesus. They were still employed in this nefarious undertaking, when the governor again demanded an answer from the people in regard to his proposition. "Are ye determined?" cried he to the attending throng. "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" The whole multitude then exclaimed all at once, "'Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.'" Pilate, in his turn, endeavoured to soften the furious mob, and turning to them once more said to them, "'What will

ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call King of the Jews?" And they cried out again, "'Crucify him, crucify him.'" Pilate strove a third time to induce them to adopt milder sentiments, and thus argued with them, "'Why, what evil hath he done?' I have found, as I have already so often declared to you, 'no fault of death in him. I will, therefore, chastise him, and let him go.'" This new interposition, like the former, was of no effect. The people were still instant with loud voices in requiring him to be crucified, and their voices and those of the chief priests prevailed. For Pilate being stupified and deafened with these outcries and exclamations, and seeing that the members of the high council themselves both united with the populace and set them on, and that their tumultuous vociferations were every moment increasing, he considered it in vain to offer any farther remonstrances.

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. Woe to the people that have ungodly teachers and guides!
2. How inconstant is the applause of the many, and how changeable also the best judgments of men!
3. It was one of the most acute sufferings of Jesus, that such a miscreant as this Barabbas should be placed in competition with him, and even preferred before him.
4. How good is it for me, when I am despised and rejected by my fellow-creatures, that I know that I am honoured of God, and received into grace!
5. Man, in his state of nature, makes always a perverted choice: he chooses darkness instead of light, folly instead of wisdom, yea, hell instead of heaven.

6. We must not allow ourselves to be withheld from the practice of good by any importunities, neither by the fear of any man, nor by complacency or civility towards any one, be he who he will.

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XXXI. PILATE'S LAST SOLEMN ATTESTATION OF THE  
INNOCENCE OF JESUS.

THE tumult among the people continuing to grow stronger, Pilate became afraid of opposing them farther, particularly as an insurrectionary uproar might easily have ensued, the blame of which would, perhaps, have been attached, at his own imminent peril, to himself. But in order to testify, by a solemn external act, that he took no part in the condemnation and death of Jesus, he caused water to be brought to him, and washed his hands in the presence of the multitude, saying, “‘I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it:’ ye are responsible for this murder.” To this declaration the people unanimously answered, “Yes, yes: ‘his blood be on us and on our children.’ We take the responsibility of his execution, before heaven, wholly upon ourselves. May the divine wrath follow both us and our posterity if his blood be unjustly shed!”

*Practical Inferences.*

1. It serves as no justification to the sinner when he persuades himself that he has not sinned of his own free accord, but through an imagined inevitableness, or from the dread of his fellow-creatures.

2. Through an empty ceremony the criminality of a sinful conscience cannot be obliterated, nor the transgression of a duty repaired.

3. A dissembler augments his guilt when he strives outwardly to get rid of the appearance of it, instead of adopting the proper means to free himself from it altogether, and to purify himself as well internally as externally.

4. Ah ! never must I reject God and his Anointed, nor impiously call down his anger by imprecations either upon myself or others.

5. The terrible judgment with which God ultimately visited and chastised the Jews proves, in an undeniable manner, that Jesus died as the perfectly righteous One, the Son of the most high God.

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#### XXXII. JESUS SCOURGED.

PILATE was now aware, when too late, that he had conceded much more than he ought to have done to the clamours of the people. But he had already proceeded to a point from which he could not recede without injury to his dignity or honour, as he perhaps thought, or without exasperating the Jewish populace to a yet more unbounded extent. Hence he yielded to the desire of the multitude, and released to them Barabbas, whom they never ceased eagerly to demand, though he had been committed to prison for the two-fold atrocities of murder and sedition. But Jesus he ordered to be prepared for the punishment of death,

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which the rabble had chosen and confirmed as the lot of the Redeemer, and delivered him over to be scourged, which usually preceded crucifixion. The soldiers of the governor, on this mandate, immediately led him into the common hall of the palace, and assembled around him in a full body. They then tore the white garment in which he was attired, when sent away by Herod, from his back, and bound him naked to a pillar. They next scourged him with a lash, composed of thongs twisted together, as long as they perceived no excessive diminution of his strength visible.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. We must entertain upright sentiments in regard to truth and conscience, and never seek to hold both with God and the world at once.

2. Here Jesus sank down to the lowest degree of the servile state, that he might, through his gracious help and humble submission, secure to us the freedom of the children of God.

3. Oh ! how I ought to hate sin, seeing what painful ignominy it brought upon my Redeemer !

4. Jesus was wounded for my transgressions, he was bruised for my iniquities, and with his stripes was I healed.

5. May the holy resignation and perfectly divine conduct of my Saviour, in this hard hour of trial, encourage me to imitate him under all my unmerited sufferings, and in every time of need !

XXXIII. THE MOCKERY AND ABUSE OF JESUS UNDER  
THE HANDS OF THE SOLDIERS.

THE sad spectacle of the sacred person of the Saviour mangled and enfeebled so little affected the rude soldiery, that, on the contrary, they bent all their thoughts to the invention of new methods of increasing his pangs and his disgrace. They put upon him a scarlet robe, or officer's mantle, because a similar habit was the usual dress of kings and commanders; they platted a crown of thorns and set it upon his head, and in his right hand they placed a reed, which was to represent a royal sceptre—the type, indeed, of a frail dominion, and one most unlike to that of the prince whose sovereignty they thus derided! To carry their affronting mockery to the last stretch of insolence, these military hirelings next bowed their knees before him, and congratulated him as a monarch who had just ascended his throne, crying out, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And as often as they approached him in this posture of pretended reverence, they buffeted his cheeks, and spat upon him, and took the reed and smote him on the head.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. It is the highest unrighteousness when one man exposes another to scorn and insulting laughter, and especially if the latter is a good and virtuous person.
2. It is extreme cruelty to deride a man already weighed down by oppression and distress, or afflicted with bodily anguish.
3. To what inhuman acts of violence and injustice



may that man be hurried who abandons himself to the prevailing spirit of unbelief and mockery!

4. The peculiar sufferings of Jesus here related is also an essential part of the atonement made by him for the sins of the world, as wanton barbarity and an insulting temper are but too common among the children of men.

5. Since my Jesus endured such diversified and manifold ignominy, insults, and torments, why should I be so easily irritated, and so greatly enraged, at the little injuries done to me, or at the slight griefs which I have to bear?

#### XXXIV. ECCE HOMO! OR THE PUBLIC EXHIBITION OF JESUS TO THE JEWISH MULTITUDE.

PILATE almost seems to have believed, that by the ill treatment which he allowed his men to exercise upon Christ the Jewish people would be the more easily moved in his behalf, and at length yield to the sensations of compassion and humanity. He caused Jesus, therefore, to be brought to a place where he could be seen at once by the whole assembled crowd, and standing by himself, thus addressed them: “‘Behold, I bring him forth to you, that you may know I find no fault in him,’ that you may see how fully convinced I am that he is guiltless.” While he was yet speaking these words, Jesus appeared in his miserable attire, the crown of thorns on his head, and the purple robe of mockery, with which the soldiers had arrayed him, thrown over his lacerated, bleeding back. “Be-

hold," cried Pilate to the people, at this heart-rending sight, which might have awakened pity in the hearts of the most barbarous savages, "Behold the man!" But no such affection was stirred up in the bosoms of the chief priests and great law-officers of Jerusalem at the melancholy, appalling view. As soon as they beheld Jesus, they resumed their old shout: "Crucify him! crucify him!" This outrageous and unjust behaviour of the descendants of Irsael put Pilate out of all temper, and he said to them with much vehemence, "If ye will absolutely have the execution of this man, then execute him yourselves, and answer for it; as to me, I consider him to be completely innocent. 'Take ye him,' if it must be so, 'and crucify him, for I find,' I again declare to you, 'no fault in him.'" The Jews now perceived more evidently than ever how little Pilate was inclined to satisfy their wishes, if by any means he might possibly avoid it. The dread of seeing their whole design frustrated at last induced them, therefore, to lay an accusation before the heathen judge, which exposed both their law, dear though the letter of it was to them, and themselves to the ridicule of the heathens. "We have a law, said they, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God: he has given himself out, as we have proved to our satisfaction, to be the Son of Jehovah, whom we and our ancestors have ever worshipped, and thus blasphemed the Lord, of which crime the punishment by our statutes is death." This was applying to the servants of idolatry and to the despisers of Judaism to be the preservers of the Hebrew religion, too weak to defend itself, and to stand forth as the champions of the true God, the God of Isaac and of Jacob; as if the Almighty required in his cause the avenging aid of

the adorers of stocks and stones. It was also an abandonment of their former charges, which related only to temporal concerns, and chiefly interested the Roman government itself.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Perseverance in sin will ultimately rob us of all human feelings, and debase us to the nature of the brutes.

2. It is a proof of an exceedingly corrupted heart, when we can regard suffering innocence without sympathy or emotion.

3. For inflaming my love towards God, and for overcoming the terrors of death, I will often and believably consider the sufferings of my Redeemer.

4. They who in time past beheld Jesus in his debasement—how will the same tremble when they see him coming in his glory !

5. It is very common for sinners to employ even the texts of the holy scriptures in excuse of their evil deeds.

6. Anger and the love of revenge so blind the reason, that they who are led by them not only persist in the basest falsehoods, but fall into the most palpable absurdities and grossest dereliction of their own interest.

XXXV. THE LAST JUDICIAL HEARING OF CHRIST.

WHEN Pilate learned that Jesus had declared himself to be the Son of God, he was still more fearful to pronounce upon him the definitive sentence of death ;

being apprehensive, perhaps, according to his religious notions, that he might draw down upon himself the vengeance of the celestial deities, if he were to do violence to a divine and more than ordinary being. He immediately directed, therefore, that Jesus should be conducted back into the judgment-hall, or court of the palace, being desirous to obtain a more certain elucidation of this mysterious circumstance. Here he again began to interrogate Jesus, saying to him, "Whence art thou?" a question, the abruptness and hurry of which are a strong indication of the agitated and doubtful state of the inquirer's thoughts. But Jesus did not vouchsafe to him any reply, foreseeing that it would be ultimately in vain, and void of all useful purpose farther to instruct the pagan chief in the sublime doctrine of his origin. Pilate appears to have felt himself aggrieved by this silence, for his succeeding words evidently betray a considerable degree of warmth. "'Speakest thou not,' even to me?" said Pilate; "'Knowest thou not, that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?" Jesus then replied to him with a placid yet candid boldness, "'Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore, he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.' Were thy authority, I mean, not granted to thee by Divine Power, thou couldst have no control either over my person or my life. Hence, not being ignorant that thou art acting wrong, thou wilt draw down upon thyself a heavy criminality and the wrath of Heaven, through the wicked and unjust application of thy official trust. Nevertheless, the guilt of them who have placed me before thy tribunal is still greater than thine."

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Even the most wicked cannot always silence or suppress the voice of their awakened conscience.

2. The earnest recollection of God, and his infinite righteousness, is able sometimes to agitate and affect the most unfeeling hearts.

3. The mighty and the powerful of the world forget, far too easily, that they have their authority from God; and are thence unable to act according to their own arbitrary will, save when the unerring decrees of omniscient goodness concede to them the permission.

4. All the privileges and gifts of men, and all the vicissitudes that attend them, flow from the government of God.

5. Magisterial persons will, above all others, have to render a severe account to the Lord, if they overstep the duties of their station.

6. The greater the means of knowledge and godliness are, in opposition to which we sin, the greater also is our culpability.

## XXXVI. THE FINAL CONDEMNATION OF JESUS.

THE speech of Jesus, contained in the last narrative, made so sensible an impression upon the heart of Pilate, that, from the moment in which he heard it, he renewed, with double ardour, his endeavours to set him at liberty. To this end, he returned again once more to the eager crowd, and offered fresh arguments to them for the liberation of Christ: but they, instead

of being influenced by his pleading, cried out to him in a threatening tone, “ ‘ If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar’s friend : whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar.’ Dost thou favour this culprit ? then canst thou not be a sincere servant to thy emperor ; for it is undeniable, that he, who usurps a royal name and claim among us, must rebel against the imperial power, and violate the rights which it possesses, and the obedience due to it, with foulest treason.” Pilate was thrown by these unexpected words into the utmost perplexity and consternation ; for he well knew with what sternness his puissant and despotic master was inclined to treat every crime that presented even the most distant semblance of mutiny, treachery, or refractoriness, to his sole dominion : thus wrong obtained the full victory over right. Pilate now placed himself, in trepidation, and without the least delay, upon the judgment-seat, in the place called the Pavement, in Hebrew *Gabbatha*, and had Jesus again brought forth, that he might pass, finally and irrevocably, the fatal sentence upon him. The hastening of this act was become so much the more necessary, as the day of preparation for the passover was arrived, and the investigation of the case of the Redeemer had already lasted for six hours. When Jesus was now set before Pilate, the latter said to the triumphing Jews, “ Behold your king !” But they, full of indignation, exclaimed in answer, “ Away with him ! away with him ! Crucify him !” Pilate then added, and it may be supposed tauntingly, “ Shall I crucify your king ?” To this the chief priests, in the name of themselves and of the people, replied, “ ‘ We have no king but Cæsar !’ we neither know nor acknowledge any supreme ruler over us, except

the emperor." Pilate, on hearing this declaration, confirmed, without longer remonstrance, the decree of death; and commanded that all the preparations necessary for the crucifixion should be made immediately.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. How changeable are the best intentions and dispositions of men, when they are not strengthened and established through the grace of God!

2. How many allow themselves to be seduced, through the favour and the friendship of the great, to set religion, conscience, and integrity, at nought!

3. The innate conceptions and natural feeling of good and evil, belonging to man, are far too weak to restrain him from the latter, or to endue him with power to exercise the former.

4. The hypocritical and malignant character of the enemies of Jesus shows itself, under all circumstances, in the blackest shape of abomination, while, by this very contrast, the innocence of Christ appears every where in so much the more clear a light.

5. The unjust condemnation of Christ may be looked upon as the repeal of our well-merited doom of perdition.

XXXVII. JESUS LED TO BE CRUCIFIED.

JESUS now saw himself again in the custody of the soldiers, who in various ways still exercised their malevolence upon him. Before they led him forth to

execution, they, however, took off the scarlet robe, and re-clothed the Saviour in his own garments : the cross was then produced, and the hands of the Lord were bound by his fierce guards to the transverse beam. From the palace, he was made to proceed to the spot called the “ place of a scull,”—in the prevailing dialect of the people and the time, Golgotha. This hill, situated at the outside of the city, lay at the distance of about two hundred paces from the walls of Jerusalem. The whole way through the streets, Jesus carried the cross himself ; but, as he came out of the gate, his strength seems to have been so greatly exhausted, that he was incapable of going forward with the melancholy burden any farther. Here, happily, the awful procession was met by a man named Simon, who was a native of Cyrene, a large town in Africa, and the father of Alexander and Rufus, who became subsequently Christians and preachers of the faith : him the guards and conductors of Christ compelled to take the cross, laying it upon him, that he might carry it after Jesus.

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. Jesus, who but a few days before had gone through the streets of Jerusalem amid the triumphant acclamations and hosannas of applauding and adoring crowds, was now doomed to pass along them as a detested, condemned malefactor, loaded with the utmost contempt. So speedily do the glory and fortune of the world change and disappear ! What Christian shall now grieve at the loss of popular favour ?

2. We often deem it to be an accident, when any affliction unexpectedly befalls us ; but the wise governance of God is ever busy in such occurrences,



and fails not, if our own fault does not intervene, to promote through them our ultimate and utmost good.

3. God was pleased to afford to his Son, laden with the sins of the world, and enduring the punishment of the iniquities of the human race, some relief under the extreme exhaustion of his bodily vigour and spirits. This is a consolatory thought for me, when I, who am God's adopted, feel also the weakness of my powers, whether corporeal or mental, and am rendered by my afflictions conscious of the frailty of my nature.

4. As a christian, I am bound to the endurance of troubles, and even required to take certain sufferings voluntarily upon myself.

5. Trouble appears to mere human nature to be a terrible load; but grace makes it light and easy to be supported.

6. Let us go forth unto Jesus, without the camp, bearing his reproach.

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XXXVIII. THE DISCOURSE OF JESUS ON THE WAY TO GOLGOTHA.

JESUS was accompanied towards Golgotha by a great number of persons. Some of them were desirous, from curiosity, of witnessing his execution; but others followed him from respect and love. Among the latter were certain women, who ceased not to bewail the Redeemer, beating their breasts, and weeping in deepest sorrow at his mournful fate. Still, however, this display of sympathy was, with the most of each sex, apparently nothing more than the effect of an impulse of

pity; and but a very few, indeed, seem to have acknowledged him as the Messiah, and believed in him. Jesus turned to these females, and thus spoke to them: “ ‘ Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children: for, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say: Blessed are the barren, and the womb that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us!’ Shed not your tears, ye compassionate few among the female dwellers of the proud city of Israel, for my sake, but for the sake of yourselves and of your offspring; because I assure you, that many years will not elapse ere she shall be deemed fortunate, and favoured by Heaven, that was never a mother. Then shall ye seek to hide yourselves in the holes of the rocks, and consider it a happiness, if their huge masses might only roll down upon you, and put an end to your lives. ‘ For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?’ If the fresh wood is cut down and used for fuel, how much the more shall the dry and fruitless tree be rooted up, and cast into the fire? If I, who am perfectly innocent and without blemish, have been delivered over to such a destiny, how shall it be with you, whose criminality is at best so great; or how shall they fare, who are stained and wholly blotted with vices?”

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. How obscure are the views of many christians in the contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus! How few feel actually that which forms the essential impression to be produced by this sacred meditation!

2. Jesus proved himself, as he went to his death, to be the true prophet, and the real friend of sinners. Would that I also, on the approach of my latter end, might be thus faithful and instructive to those around me !

3. I here perceive in Jesus the great difference between the death of the righteous and the impious. When the ungodly man, at the moment of impending dissolution, trembles and despairs, the pious christian is comforted and courageous.

4. How little reason have we to lament over the departure of the good out of the world ! We, who still live, are far more to be pitied than they ; since, perhaps, some great calamity may still be reserved for us on this side of the grave, and, through our own fault, in the conduct of our future life, a still more tremendous fate may await us beyond the tomb.

5. The highest state of terrestrial felicity may suddenly be turned into a state of punishment ; or, through a divine judgment, tend to the full accumulation of our misery.

6. The rejection of Jesus, or of his doctrine, draws down as well upon an entire people, as upon private individuals, the most severe chastisements of the justice of the Almighty.

7. The literally-fulfilled prediction of Jesus in regard to Jerusalem, and the present condition of the Jewish people, afford two of the strongest proofs that Christ really came from God, and that his doctrine is the truth.

8. Great is the loss for a people or state, the city, the town, the village, when only one righteous man is carried off.

## XXXIX. THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS.

THE awful train at length arrived on the mount of Golgotha; and immediately the soldiers were employed to erect the cross at the appointed spot. In the meantime they presented to Jesus vinegar, or sour wine, mixed with myrrh, in order that he might drink it! This, it may however be remarked, was a potion usually given to malefactors prior to their execution for the purpose of deadening their sensations, and rendering them, through a certain degree of stupefaction, insensible, in some measure, to the extreme agony of their horrid death. But Jesus merely tasted this unhallowed draught, and then refused to take it, because, in regard to his mortal nature, he desired, and chose to be, with perfect presence of mind, in full possession of all his senses, powers, and faculties to the last. In a few minutes after these preparations were finished, the soldiers tore off his clothes from his profaned body, and raised him upon the beam or timber-piece made fast nearly at the middle of the cross. His feet and hands were then firmly bound, and lastly nailed to this fatal engine of deadly torture. In the same manner two criminals were crucified with Jesus who had been condemned to this fate on account of robbery and murder. The cross of the one was placed at the right hand, and that of the other at the left hand of the Saviour, who thus hung suspended between two murderers. The soldiers placed him in this situation, most likely, as a last token of disgrace, meaning by this indignity to proclaim, that the Son of God was deemed by them, and by his Jewish persecutors, to be

the most flagrant and infamous of all transgressors. But, through this very circumstance, that prophecy was fulfilled which says, 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' It was the third hour, agreeably to the Hebrew computation, or, according to our time, about nine o'clock in the morning, when the Lord Jesus was crucified.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. This also was an aggravation of the debasement of Jesus, that a draught so miserable and disgusting in itself, and so painfully degrading, from the ordinary purpose of the mixture, should have been offered to him for his refreshment in his last hour.

2. The refusal of Jesus to drink the sense-benumbing potion was another proof, added to the many demonstrations which he had already given, of his perfect readiness to endure all the pangs of death.

3. Jesus the crucified is a consolatory spectacle for me, because him, whom I so behold, it is vouchsafed to me to be able to acknowledge as a Saviour, who bears my curse and obtains for me bliss in exchange.

4. Although the Jewish people accomplished their insidious and bloody design, and Pilate fulfilled his views in maintaining his popularity and court favour, through the crucifixion of Jesus, yet they had no power to do more or less than God had determined.

5. Let the cross of Jesus be to me a memorial of his love, and also that saving knowledge, of which my heart must prompt me to boast, above all the other acquirements of the mind.

6. Let the cross of Jesus impel me to renounce sin and the world.

7. Here three persons, if I may dare so to allude to the Son of God, died by one and the same death ; but, according to the mind and disposition of each, their sufferings were totally diversified, and took respectively a different form and turn, being likewise in their issue reciprocally dissimilar, in conformity to the great discrepancy of character by which these individuals were distinguished. This rule is of universal extent, and embraces men of all descriptions, their troubles, and death.

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#### XL. THE INTERCESSION OF JESUS FOR HIS ENEMIES.

JESUS entirely and unconditionally abandoned himself to the malice of his cruel adversaries with full resignation to the will of his Father. No threats were heard from him, when the soldiers pierced his hands and feet through and through with nails, nor did any angry or hasty murmur escape on this occasion from his lips. But what must fill every reflecting mind, not wholly lost to all the better feelings of humanity, with the deepest veneration, and a yet higher degree of admiration, is, that he not only acted with the wonderful and more than earthly patience here described, but even in the very midst of the barbarous outrages, which they forced him to experience, in their utmost poignancy, prayed for his enemies with all the fervour of his soul to God. “ ‘ Father !’ he exclaimed, ‘ forgive them ; for they know not what they do.’ They consider neither the nature and consequences of their conduct, nor the sanctity and office of him whom they

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slay, and in regard to whom they so rashly increase their load of sin."

*Practical Inferences.*

1. In what a blessed frame of mind did my Saviour suffer, remaining faithful to his Father and his God, even when afflicted, in consequence of the divine anger, with the most agonizing pangs! Oh! why am I, under the little troubles to which I am sometimes subjected, less true and stedfastly obedient?

2. Assuredly it is a very great consolation for me, that when I am forsaken by my fellow-men, I have still always the right to turn to God as my Father.

3. To the Redeemer the salvation of men was dearer than his own welfare and ease. And herein at this day consists the sign of a true christian.

4. Ignorance has often a great share in the sins of men both towards God and towards each other. But ignorance may often also constitute an additional crime to the crime committed.

5. In Jesus I have a compassionate high-priest, and intercessor with the Father.

6. I likewise am included in the supplication made by the suffering Jesus for his injurers, and to this intercession I now owe the respite of grace which is still granted to me.

7. Jesus has, in the sublime petition above transcribed, left behind, for my example, a most extraordinary and impressive instance of benignity, which I am bound to the utmost of my power to imitate.

## XLI. THE INSCRIPTION ON THE CROSS OF JESUS.

IT was a custom among the Romans, that, when any one was to be put to death in consequence of a sentence of the law, the cause of his condemnation should be made publicly known in writing ; the scroll on which this statement was inscribed being either carried before the criminal to the place of execution, or there fixed over him, exposed to general view. In respect to Jesus this practice was also observed. Pilate caused the reason of his crucifixion to be signified in large letters on a white board, which was placed above his head, and attached to the cross. This title or superscription of arraignment was couched in the following terms: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS! These words were expressed in three languages, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, as there were many persons at this time in Jerusalem, whose native tongue was respectively one of these idioms, and whose acquaintance with the rest might have been too trifling to enable them to understand the inscription, had it been confined to a single dialect. This written designation was read by a great number of the Jewish people. For the scene of horror being so near to Jerusalem, a large concourse must have been induced through curiosity to flock out to the spot ; especially as the event could not, at this hour, but be generally known and current throughout the city. To the greater part of these the superscription selected must have been very obnoxious, and the high priests in particular showed themselves to be extremely displeased at it. The title which Pilate had dictated was chiefly on this account offensive to them, because they conceived that it was chosen from contempt for



their body, and in honour to Christ. They hastened, therefore, in the heat of their vexation, to the governor, and represented to him that it was necessary that he should alter the phrase, and, instead of intimating that "Jesus was the King of the Jews," announce that he said, "I am the King of the Jews;" that he gave himself out to be that which he was not, a royal regent of the Hebrew nation. But Pilate was offended at their request, and, moved by evident impatience, replied, "'What I have written, I have written.' The character which I have ascribed to the sufferer is that which shall remain."

*Practical Inferences.*

1. So excellently and so wonderfully did God, in his infinite wisdom, order all things in the life of Jesus, that even in his deepest ignominy he was glorified as the Son of the Most High, the sole Ruler of Rulers, and the King of Kings.

2. The superscription of the cross of Jesus affords another proof of his perfect innocence.

3. By this triple inscription of the title of Christ, the account of his death was spread with accelerated rapidity throughout the three great nations of the then inhabited globe; and history bears ample testimony to the useful result of this circumstance.

4. I am hence assured that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world.

5. O! that the inscription on my grave-stone might be, in its kind, as true and as honourable as that of Jesus!

XLII. JESUS'S GARMENTS PARTED AMONG THE  
SOLDIERS.

As soon as the soldiers had nailed Christ to the cross, they made among themselves a division of his clothes, which belonged to them, according to the Roman law, as a perquisite. Of his mantle and upper garments they formed four shares, one for each soldier. But his under coat could not well be parted, because it was of one piece and without seam, woven from the top throughout. Therefore they said to one another, " ' Let us not rend it, but cast lots whose it shall be.' " It is better that one of us should possess it entire, than that it should be spoiled or destroyed by being torn asunder. Let him to whom fortune shall grant it keep it without envy to himself." In this they unanimously agreed, and consequently cast lots for the piece of raiment in debate. Though the soldiers did this merely from self-interest, and though the incident, considered in itself, may appear perfectly trivial, yet by this event a material passage of a weighty and affecting prophecy was fulfilled, in which the Messiah is represented to say, ' They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they cast lots.' The duty of this military escort was not, however, yet ended ; for they continued to stand by the cross and watch Jesus, in order that he might not be taken away.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Neither the Jews nor the heathens, who took part in the execution of Jesus, though they acted in the whole affair in conformity to their impious wishes,

and treated the Saviour wholly according to their pleasure, could, however, do otherwise than the counsel of the Lord had previously decided.

2. Under all the abuse which the children of God suffer from the world, they may be certain that the latter can effect nothing, except that which God has resolved.

3. All they who endure or have endured the robbery of their goods may comfort themselves with the remembrance of the now recorded event, in the history of the Redeemer, who was spoiled and stripped to the skin.

4. The privation of his raiment was for Jesus a token of the lowest debasement and the most abject poverty. It assimilated him to the most despised and degraded of the refuse of society, and it bereft him of every iota of earthly property ; so that he could not call one rag his own, and was thus rendered poorer than even the tattered beggar.

5. How composed may I be, when, at the point of death, I look forward to the total relinquishment of all my terrestrial goods, and the entire partition of my fortune among others, if I then know that my better portion is in heaven !

#### XLIII. JESUS MOCKED ON THE CROSS.

THE immense multitude who had come out of the city with Jesus, or afterwards followed him, continued standing at the place of execution, and looking on,

while he was crucified. A part of this crowd did so, as was before remarked, from mere motives of curiosity, and others from a sentiment of pity, but many also, alas! from an excess of cruelty. For a number of those who passed close by the cross, instigated by a spirit of inconceivable savageness, insulted and mocked the Saviour, as he there hung stretched in pain more exquisite than that of the torturing rack, sometimes by wagging their heads, and sometimes by other scornful gestures. In addition to this they scoffed at him in taunts such as these: “‘Thou, that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself’—Thou wast hardy enough to profess that thou couldst demolish our holy edifice, and erect it anew in a space of time even less than half a week; now a much easier miracle is required from thee: help thyself out of thy present state. ‘If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.’ If thou hast indeed the Almighty for thy father, then descend thou among us, and prove thyself to be him whom thou falsely pretendest to be.” It is not so extremely surprising that the vulgar and promiscuous mob treated Jesus in this manner, considering how they had been prepossessed against him by so many unjust reports, and false deceitful judgments, originating in their superiors, and in those in whose understanding and learning they were taught and wont to place implicit confidence. But it must excite our astonishment to find, that persons of condition and better knowledge united themselves with the illiterate rabble, or rather instigated them to this shameful brutality. For even the high priests, together with the scribes, or deep-studied lawyers, the elders of the people, and the Pharisees, whose pride should have withheld them from such grossness, re-echoed and im-

proved in scurrility the opprobrious railleries of the meaner classes, and cried in a supercilious jeering tone : “‘He saved others, himself he cannot save!’—To others he brought assistance in their need, but to himself he is not able to afford the slightest aid !—‘ If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him ! He trusted in God, let him deliver now if he will have him !’—His confidence was in the Lord : now then let the Lord, if he be well pleased in him, extricate him from his misery, and snatch him from his impending death. For he said, ‘ I am the Son of God.’” The soldiers, likewise, who kept the watch, caught the contagion, aped the general language and behaviour of those around them, and derided Christ too, in such manner as they best could, insolently running up to him, and offering to him, with mock compassion, draughts of vinegar, the common drink which they carried about with them, and then adding with a contemptuous mien, “ If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself.”

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. The irrational and unmeaning mockery in which the enemies of Christ indulged themselves served to magnify his innocence, although it formed one of his sharpest sufferings.

2. Among the most inhuman vices—let me never forget this already suggested maxim, so worthy, however, from its importance, of recollection and repetition—is to be ranked above all, that wanton wickedness by which the sufferings of the innocent, the distresses of the sorrowful, the need of the miserable, or the helplessness of the forsaken, is ridiculed and turned into jest.

3. To what a falling off are the ministers of religion

wont to come, when the fear of God ceases to reign in their hearts ! They then prove the most dangerous foes to piety.

4. To simple unenlightened reason it appears incomprehensible how God can love a man, and yet let him fall into misery and distress. But he whose mind is illumined by grace understands this.

5. If I do nothing deserving of ridicule or contempt, I can the more composedly endure mockery and ill treatment.

6. How much soever unbelief and cavilling impiety may urge as a reproach and objection against Christ, that he did not descend from the cross, this circumstance, far from diminishing or sinking the glory or the credibility of Jesus, exalts and augments both.

7. Through faith and patience, I will frustrate even the latest attacks of Satan upon my heart, and through the might of Jesus I will overcome them.

#### XLIV. THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE TWO CRIMINALS CRUCIFIED WITH JESUS.

EVEN one of the malefactors who were crucified at the side of Jesus allowed himself, notwithstanding the awfulness of the moment and his frightful condition, to be carried away by the evil example of the people with their spiritual guides, elders, and scribes ; and joined in the general insult of his guiltless and divine fellow-sufferer. “ If thou be Christ,” said he, “ save thyself and us from this punishment of crucifixion. Art thou

that Son of God, for whom thou givest thyself out? then let both thyself and us too be rescued and set at liberty through the divine might to which thou pretendest. If thou canst not do this, what better art thou than we?" On hearing this rash and flagitious speech, the other criminal, far differently affected by the passing scene, was filled with a most justifiable indignation, and thus rebuked his blaspheming partner in iniquity: "'Dost thou not fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation?' Hast thou abandoned all dread of the Lord, that thou darest, like these spectators of thy own shame, to revile this righteous person, while thou thyself art suffering the same death as he? 'And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.' Thy reflections are so much the more unbecoming, because it behoves thee to consider, that, so far as regards you and me, the punishment which we undergo is our well-merited desert, being the right and necessary consequence of our crimes, and of a life of guilt. But he, whom thou offendest with thy abusive tongue, has committed no transgression to merit his present fate, nor ever indeed performed one improper or culpable act of any kind."

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. The ungodly, when once confirmed in their wicked course, continue, even under the pressure and smart of the avenging justice of the Lord, destitute of all sensibility of heart. Nay, they often, in this very state, increase the terrible sum of their eternal responsibility by fresh excess.—A strong evidence in favour of the everlasting duration of the punishment of hell!

2. It constitutes the highest degree of depravity and

obduracy, when a man already on the brink of the grave, and with death directly before his eyes, perseveres in his wonted sins.

3. It is difficult in the last moments of existence to lay aside our habitual disposition to sin, and to work in ourselves a sincere and thorough conversion.

4. He that takes care always to walk before God will never permit himself to be led into the practice of raillery and mockery, but hold a bridle on his tongue, that it may not utter evil or distress others.

5. It is a proof of a radical and favourable change of our sentiments, when we apply ourselves to amend the souls of those who have hitherto been the associates of our vices.

6. Under all the troubles that we endure, we must always remember, that in the sight of God we have rendered ourselves deserving of them.

7. If it be ever necessary to make a lively contrite acknowledgment of our sins, it must be then when we are on the point of appearing before the tribunal of Jesus.

8. One of the chief duties connected with our death is, when we have injured or offended any one, or by our example led him astray, to seek, in the one case, his reconciliation, and, in the other, to endeavour, as much as possible, ere we depart and are no more, to promote and insure his future reformation. The counterpart or corresponding law of this obligation requires in an equal degree, that, if we ourselves are the wronged or aggressed parties, we must be no less ready to forgive our adversaries, and to enter into terms of amity and affection with them; farther, losing no time to encourage and excite generally all persons



within our influence to the exercise of piety, to bestow our last blessing upon them, and to advance, as far as we can, their prosperity and happiness.

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#### XLV. THE PENITENT THIEF PARDONED.

AFTER the close of the admonition which the conscious and converted sinner crucified with Jesus had so earnestly given to his hardened fellow-criminal, he addressed himself to our Saviour with a deeply affected heart, and prayed, “ ‘ Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.’ Vouchsafe to me, O Christ, thou Son of God ! thy gracious favour when thou shalt come in thy kingly glory to judge the world, and let me not perish eternally.” Jesus answered, “ ‘ Verily, verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.’ Thou hast magnified me in the hour of my death, and thou hast done well ; thy repentance through faith has saved thee. Thou shalt not only in the end be pardoned and freed from the penalty of thy sins, but this very day shalt thou enter with me into the enjoyment of everlasting blessedness.”

#### *Practical Inferences.*

1. The penitent thief wisely sought to make a good use of the few wretched minutes of his remaining life, and, in the midst of his bodily pangs, provided for the salvation of his immortal soul. This same solicitude must occupy me also beyond all other cares, whether in the time of health or sickness.

2. It is not advisable to delay my repentance till the uncertain period at which I may be thrown upon a bed of sickness or feel the grasp of death, since I shall not, it is most probable, enjoy such an opportunity of contrition and supplication as that of which the crucified robber happily availed himself.

3. Jesus exhibited even at the last verge of his existence, when already the dews of death were on him, his power over the living and the dead, his authority to pardon the sins of men, and his ability, willingness, and might to exalt and receive sinners into heaven.

4. Jesus was unchangeable in his sentiments in regard to sinners. Even when he was on the point of yielding up the ghost, he showed that it was his delight to bring the erring and the lost into the paths of bliss.

5. It was an invigorating consolation for Jesus, under all his afflictions, that he was assured of his glorification at the appointed time. And how full of comfort may not I also be in my dying moments, if I only have the same conviction !

6. The blessed state of my soul will take place immediately after the death of my body. The day of my corporeal decease is the day of my ascension to heaven.

#### XLVI. JESUS'S ANXIETY FOR HIS MOTHER.

AMONG those who were present at the crucifixion of Christ was Mary, his mother, accompanied by her sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and their mutual friend, Mary Magdalene. John, that disciple to whom Jesus had all along vouchsafed the tokens of an

especial love, was likewise bold enough to venture to attend the crucifixion of his adored Master. All these pious and faithful individuals stood near the cross, and regarded their Benefactor and their Friend with hearts bursting in grief. But most poignant and distracting was the anguish which the mother felt, when she beheld her much loved and sacred Son exposed to such excruciating torment. Perhaps too, for a moment, the passing thought in particular wrung her soul, that after the death of Christ she would be doomed to live destitute, forsaken, and despised. Jesus saw the sorrows of her bosom, and with the gentlest pity bowed his head towards her, and said, “ ‘ Woman, behold thy Son !’ This, my late dear disciple, will be thy son hereafter, beloved mother ! in my stead. He will be thy comforter, thy defender, thy provider, thy support.” He then fixed his looks upon his weeping agitated follower, and cried to him with irresistible accents, “ ‘ Behold thy mother !’ Let this, my mother, be to thee as thy mother. I relinquish her to thy care, protection, and support.” John was exceedingly rejoiced to be thus honoured with the last and most precious pledge of his Master’s confidence : and not less willing than proud to obey the final mandate, and satisfy the parting wishes of the expiring Saviour, “ from that hour he took her into his own home.”

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Among all those persons whom Jesus had loaded with such great benefits, there were but four found who were not ashamed of his cross, or else afraid to be discovered near it. How small is the number, to this day, of the true professors and worshippers of Christ !
2. Even when the following Jesus is attended with

dangers and difficulties, we must not be fickle or faithless to him.

3. The death of our most esteemed friends must not plunge us into an irrational excess of sorrow.

4. While Jesus was the most zealously engaged both in heart and mind in completing his satisfaction for the sins of the world, he still thought of those, whom, in his human nature, he held in affection. This should serve as a proof to us, that the love of God and that of our neighbour are inseparable.

5. It especially behoves the dying to perform offices of love. And how many opportunities are there not afforded to them for this purpose! since they so often see in their chambers, and around their death-beds, the parent or the spouse, the child, the kinsman, or the friend, and, perhaps, all these together.

6. Jesus loved his own unto the end.

7. Active goodness of heart and benevolence are the chief duties of christian morality. But they must, always be accompanied with a willing mind, and, when the occasion arrives, be exercised without delay.

8. We may rest assured that the Lord will never fail to raise up for the widow, for the orphan, and for all the abandoned and forlorn, able and willing friends and supporters, if the former do but fear him, and put their trust in him.

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XLVII. THE ANGUISH AND LAMENTATION OF JESUS  
ON THE CROSS.

It was now mid day, and Jesus had already for three hours hung on the cross, when the sun suddenly

lost its splendour, and a thick darkness diffused itself over the whole land. This event was so much the more extraordinary, as it was hardly possible, according to the course of nature, that at the time of the full moon, and such was then the period of this luminary, an eclipse of the sun could take place. During the continuance of this miraculous darkness, which lasted for three hours, Jesus was seized with an inexpressible anguish of soul, being towards the end of it heard to exclaim, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani!" which the writers of the Holy Gospel have interpreted, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This change in the established laws of nature, and the visible peculiar anguish of the Redeemer, with which it was conjoined, were surely, if aught could have been so, most awfully and imposingly adapted to awaken the dormant sensibility of the Jewish people; to bring them back out of their infatuation to sober reflection, and to restore them to reason. But neither the wonder of which they were the witnesses, nor the piercing cry of lamentation which struck their ears, made any considerable impression upon them. A number of them, on the contrary, so far from being inspired with more rational sentiments or softer emotions, availed themselves of the words of the mournful complaint of Jesus, as a new means of carrying to a yet farther extent their horrible sport with the Son of God. Thus, some of those who stood close to the cross observed, with a loud voice, as they heard him speak, "This man calleth for Elias."

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. How many plans and instruments does God employ savingly to affright sinners, and to impel them to

adopt a just and righteous way of thinking ! But how often also are the beneficent views of the Lord frustrated, through the perversity and stubbornness of sinners themselves !

2. Jesus experienced in our stead that misery, in all its infinite greatness, which consists in the desertion of us on the part of God, and through this obtained for us the grace of the Father.

3. Even under the most acute sufferings, Jesus lost not, in the least degree, his love towards, nor his confidence in, his heavenly Father. I will, therefore, hold fast to the *same* in all my necessities.

4. How great must the hatred of God be against sin, since, by reason of its dominion over the human race, the guiltless Jesus was so pierced with torments and smitten with afflictions !—It is not possible for me long to refrain from a repetition of this thought, as every line of the Gospel of Christ's sufferings suggests it to me anew.

5. Since Jesus, the beloved Son of the Father, was thus abandoned and forsaken, how can I think it strange, if I am sometimes full of fear, in respect to comfort and help from above ?

6. Let Christ, deserted by his Father on the cross, be my consolation under all the calamities of life, under the dread of death, and under all the terrors of the grave.

7. They who mocked Jesus in his intolerable anguish presented a true but revolting type of the sentiments and wickedness of the scorers of religion in our own times.

**XLVIII. THE THIRST OF JESUS ON THE CROSS, AND  
THE BEVERAGE GRANTED TO HIM.**

FROM the moment of his lamentable exclamation, the enervation and faintness of Jesus rapidly and visibly increased. He knew, however, that now almost all the things that had been prophesied concerning him in his life had been duly accomplished. It was only wanting that, according to the prediction of David, transmitted to us in the forty-second Psalm, he should make known the excessive torment which he felt from extreme drought. This long foretold appointment of his expiatory afflictions Jesus accordingly fulfilled, yielding to the violence of his sensations, by crying out, "I thirst!" The soldiers who stood around the cross immediately prepared, on hearing these words, to furnish him with a drink. There was a vessel at hand filled with vinegar, as was common on similar occasions: in this liquor they soaked a piece of sponge, and having fixed it to a sprig of hyssop, raised it up to the lips of Christ. Even this circumstance also supplied a new occasion of insult and mockery to the Jews, for as soon as they observed what the soldiers were doing, they shouted to them, "Let alone: trouble not yourselves, but leave him to his thirst. 'Let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.' He called to Elias; perhaps Elias will help him."

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Would that I, even as Jesus did, might make the will of God my chief aim both living and dying!
2. I also, perhaps, ere I breathe my last breath, shall feel the pang of that burning thirst which some-

times foreruns the struggles of death. Oh ! then shall the remembrance of Jesus thirsting on the cross be for me a quickening solace ! To me, however—I oft and gratefully think of this—far better refreshment will be administered ; at least, not even my very worst enemy will mock or taunt me in my anguish. How much more happily circumstanced shall I be than my Saviour was, when *I* thirst in this world for the last time. But he died in misery, that I might die in joy !

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#### XLIX. JESUS EXPIRES.

As soon as Jesus had received the vinegar, he exclaimed, “ It is finished ! ” And then, after a short pause, added, with a loud voice, “ Father ! into thy hands I commend my spirit ! ”

These were the last words spoken by the Redeemer in the flesh, and scarcely had he uttered them, when he bowed his head upon his bosom, and gave up the ghost.

#### *Practical Inferences.*

1. Would that I might not die, till the hour arrive when I shall be able to say, with truth, I have finished all that has been appointed to me to perform, as a man and a christian !

2. But, alas ! how much shall I find still unfinished at my end, when I look back upon my past life ! Then will the finish made by my Jesus come to my stead.



3. Jesus continued true to his Father even unto death : neither shall death sever me from him.

4. In my dying hour, my chief solicitude must be directed to the health of my soul, and to its lot in eternity.

5. A truly holy and blessed death is the consequence of a truly holy life.

6. The death of Jesus is the seal of his doctrine, and the assurance of my complete reconciliation with God.

7. In regard to the circumstances which may be attached to my body after my death, or to those of my soul abstracted from its salvation, I may keep myself entirely at ease : both my body and soul will remain under the care of the Almighty.

#### L. THE SUPERNATURAL EVENTS AT THE DEATH OF JESUS.

At the time that the death of Jesus occurred, a variety of circumstances of a most extraordinary and wonderful description ensued. The vail of the temple, which divided the sanctuary from the holy of holies, and which was so strong that it could scarcely have been torn in two by the united force of many hands, now rent asunder from top to bottom ; an earthquake shook the ground ; the rocks in the vicinity of the city were cleft and split by an invisible power ; and the firmly-closed graves, which were commonly hewn out in these stony masses, opened of themselves : many of the holy persons, also, who had lately died,

having previously accepted Jesus as the Messiah, came forth out of their tombs after his resurrection, and appeared in Jerusalem to a great number of their friends and former acquaintance.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Now that the reconciliation and atonement are completed, I have obtained a free access to the throne of grace, as well as a free entrance into heaven.

2. All the events which are here related may, even singly, confirm me in the belief, that the crucified Jesus and the Son of God are one and the same, and the true and sole Mediator and Redeemer of mankind.

3. The resurrection of so many saints may be regarded as a trophy of the victory and glory of Jesus, in his dying and rising again from the dead; and as a sure proof of his full conquest over death.

4. Here we behold a lively image of that effect which Jesus will produce, at his coming, on the day of the general resurrection, not in a few individuals only, nor at one place alone, but in all those who shall then be gathered to their fathers in every quarter and corner of the world.

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LI. THE RESULT OF THE MIRACLES WHICH DISTINGUISHED THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

The centurion, or captain, who commanded the military guard at the execution of Jesus, and even the soldiers subordinate to him, were seized with the ut-

most astonishment and consternation, when they beheld the magnanimous conduct of Jesus on the cross, unshaken and displayed with new lustre in the very instant of his dissolution; but still more so was this the case, when they felt and saw the earthquake: such, indeed, was the effect upon them, that they hesitated not to ascribe honour and praise to God, and publicly to acknowledge their convictions, crying out, "Certainly this was a righteous man; truly this was the Son of God." And even the populace, who had come in crowds out of Jerusalem to be spectators of the afflicting sight, were so struck with amazement, admiration, and awe, at this occurrence, that they beat their breasts in token of regret and sorrow, and returned, in the most violent agitation of mind, to their homes. Several of the females who had followed Jesus from Galilee, and who had performed towards him, during his life, the kindest offices of friendship, were likewise witnesses of his death and its concomitant wonders, though indeed from a distance. In this number were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, the mother of Zebedee's children. These, and several other sincere and upright persons, appear, in particular, to have been corroborated and established in their faith and love by the view of the death of Jesus, and of those miracles by which the Father of the Lord Christ, Almighty God, was pleased for our eternal good to signalize it.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Men may, without any fear or reluctance, commit sin, but they cannot, after the perpetration of their iniquity, prevent their own hearts from punishing them.
2. This will be my best encomium after my death

if the good say of me, "He lived a pious life, and walked in the world like a child of God."

3. Every thing combined in the sufferings of Jesus to manifest his innocence, and to place it beyond all doubt or denial; and even heathens themselves were compelled by their own hearts to bear witness to his integrity, and confess his glory.

4. How many means does God employ—and how many, alas! are needful—to force sinners to salutary reflection!

5. The affectionate zeal of the friends of Jesus, of the weaker sex, puts to shame the timid love of his disciples.

6. The more faithful we are to Christ, the more we experience the power and force of christianity in our souls.

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#### LII. JESUS' SIDE PIERCED.

GOD had prescribed it as a law to the people of Israel, that the corse of a person who had been executed should not remain throughout the night on the fatal tree; and the Jews considered themselves so much the more strictly bound to an exact observance of this statute on this occasion, as the day on which Jesus died the death of a criminal was the preparation-day of the high sabbath. They therefore besought Pilate, in order to accelerate the extinction of life, to allow the legs of the three crucified individuals to be broken, and their bodies to be taken down from the cross. After the desired permission had been granted, the soldiers, without farther delay, dislocated the limbs of the two malefactors, between whom the Lord Jesus

hung. When they came, however, to Jesus himself, they broke not his legs; but that they might be the more secure of his actual death—a certainty which even Pilate was anxious to obtain—they pierced his side with one of those spears which the Roman soldiers were wont to carry. Out of the orifice thus formed flowed blood and water, and in such a manner, also, that they could be distinguished the one from the other. As Jesus did not, on receiving this stab, exhibit any symptom of animation—and his instant death, if any unnoticed vestige of life had still remained in him, must inevitably have followed, even from the wound alone which had been inflicted upon him—the soldiers were now satisfactorily convinced of the total extinction of life: and we of the present day can the less doubt this most positive fact, as the whole occurrence just recited is handed down to us by the apostle John, an eye-witness of the event, a man than whom no one more worthy of credit ever wrote, and whose pen the Holy Ghost guided to note the truth. It is farther deserving of observation, that, how accidental soever the incident in question seemed to be, it happened, nevertheless, entirely in pursuance of the omniscient counsel of God, and for the fulfilment of certain types and prophecies referring to the death of the Redeemer. Hereby, in particular, came to pass the words of Moses: “Neither shall ye break a bone thereof;” or, according to John, “A bone of him shall not be broken:” for as the children of Israel were forbidden to break a bone of the paschal lamb, the symbol of Christ, so the legs of Jesus were not to be touched: and that other Scripture of the prophet Zachariah, in which the Messiah says of himself: “And they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced.”

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Hypocrites always feign to have a reverential esteem for the laws of God, though they nevertheless employ the sanction of them as a medium of unrighteousness in the execution and promotion of their wicked and malicious purposes.

2. It was absolutely necessary for the security and certainty of my faith in Jesus, that the death of Jesus should actually have taken place ; for on this depended the validity of his sacrifice.

3. If I would be convinced that Jesus indeed arose from the dead, and that I, like him, shall rise again from the tomb after death, then it is necessary that I should be assured, beyond all question, that he really died.

4. The decrees of our heavenly Father triumphed over all the plans and devices of the enemies of Jesus, and in the Lord's good time will never cease to do so, however powerful and numerous the foes of religion may be.

5. What consternation, what despair will one day fall upon the adversaries of Jesus, when they shall see, on his coming to judgment, who it was whom they abused and rejected !

6. I will, for my part, as often as I consider the sufferings of my Redeemer, look upon him with the eyes of faith, and become more and more obedient to his gospel.

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**LIII. PREPARATIONS FOR THE INTERMENT OF JESUS.**

WHEN the evening was come, a certain rich man went to Pilate, and entreated that leave might be granted him to take away the body of Jesus, in order

to bury it in a fit and suitable manner. This righteous person, held up by the sacred Scriptures to the veneration and esteem of all ages and all nations, under the name of Joseph of Arimathea, of which place he was a native, belonged also, as an assessor in that body, to the high council ; but he had taken no part, as may be easily imagined, in the unjust condemnation of Jesus, of whom he had been, though in secret, long an adherent. Pilate was greatly surprised when he heard that, even before the legs of the two malefactors were broken, Jesus had already expired, as it was not unusual for the crucified to remain alive on the cross for several days. He demanded, therefore, from the captain, who had been present on duty at the awful scene, an exact detail of the execution ; and as the latter corroborated the account previously given to him of the death of Jesus, he complied with the request of Joseph. This good and pious man immediately caused the sacred remains to be taken down from the cross, and the linen requisite for the interment to be bought. In this noble and holy purpose of paying the last solemn tribute of affection to the departed Jesus, the counsellor Nicodemus united with Joseph. He too was a member of the high council, and the same convert that came to Christ by night to be instructed by him aided Joseph in this pious act. The contribution furnished by Nicodemus was a quantity of aloes and myrrh mixed together, of the weight of a hundred pounds, as an essential gift for the burial of the Saviour, according to the Jewish fashion. After the body had been washed, they wrapped it up in fine linen cloths, together with the spices. The measures which they had thus taken in haste they were now contented to let suffice, as the despatch requisite on account of the near

approaching sabbath prevented them from honouring Jesus in the way which they had intended.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Jesus had admirers and adherents in all ranks, and among persons of every condition and calling of life.

2. What a happiness is it for the great ones of the earth, when their greatness does not withhold them from religion ! And how excellent a thing is it, when any of those to whom the Lord has given many possessions are so much the more his zealous worshippers and lovers, and employ all the power, influence, and wealth intrusted to them, for the promotion of good !

3. It was a weakness in the two friends of Jesus to perfume his body. But this circumstance teaches me that acts of the kind alluded to cannot be wholly censurable, provided they arise from a good intention.

4. Blessed are the uses of riches, when they are employed in assisting the members of Christ, whether in respect to their life or death.

5. How holy and just is the government of God ! Men designed that the grave of Jesus should be made with the wicked and the needy, and yet he found it with the pious and the opulent.

6. If I act uprightly, and fear the Lord, I shall always procure friends to take an interest in me under all circumstances.

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LIV. JESUS' BURIAL.

NEAR the hill on which Jesus was crucified, Joseph of Arimathea, who begged the body of the Saviour from Pilate, had caused a sepulchre to be hewn for



himself out of a rock in a garden. It was still new, having been but recently made, and as yet no one had been deposited in it. Into this tomb Jesus was carried, and placed in one of the spaces prepared for the bodies of the dead; after which a large stone was rolled upon the entrance of the sepulchre to prevent the access of the curious or the malicious to the body. Some of the female reverers of Jesus were also present at this most memorable of all funerals. The chief object of these women was carefully to mark the spot where the Redeemer was laid, purposing to return, and anoint the hallowed body, so soon as the sabbath should be over. But the sabbath itself they spent in stillness, and exercises of devotion.

### *Practical Inferences.*

1. Even in regard to the grave, Jesus had to assimilate himself to his brethren in the flesh, which he had so graciously assumed.

2. The interment of Jesus was united with many tokens both of debasement and exaltation. And the same conjunction is observable in the burial of every true christian. It is low and vile, when the present situation of the deceased is regarded; but it appears at once sublime and glorious, when we cast a glance at the hopes of a sincere and faithful professor of Jesus.

3. The grave was the end of all the persecutions and sufferings of Jesus: and well is it for me also that the grave will be the limit of all my afflictions, sooner or later, in a like manner!

4. Through the sojourn of Jesus in the tomb, the curse that lay on the grave has been taken away, and the sure expectancy of the resurrection obtained for me and for all men.

LV. THE LAST HOSTILE EFFORTS OF THE JEWS  
AGAINST JESUS.

THE rancorous members of the high council were exceedingly dissatisfied when they learned that Pilate had permitted Jesus to be buried with some degree of respect : and being, at the same time, apprehensive that the Roman magistrate might be yet further helpful to the partisans of the new doctrine, in the success and accomplishment of their wishes and designs, they applied on the next day once more to Pilate, and laid before him the following representations:—" ' Sir, we remember'—so spoke they—' that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, ' After three days I will rise again.' Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, ' He is risen from the dead : ' so the last error will be worse than the first.' For the multitude being misled by this report, his imposture and his pernicious cause will gain over more believers and favourers than if he had remained in life." Pilate in this point likewise accommodated himself to their will, and replied to them : " ' Ye have a watch : ' ye can take a part of the soldiers, who do duty in the temple during the festivals to guard the tomb : ' go your way ; make it as sure as you can.' " They, accordingly, not only took this precaution, but that the soldiers, if by any means they should be bribed, might not be able to deliver up the body of Jesus without certain discovery, they also put a seal upon the stone which had been placed at the mouth of the sepulchre.

*Practical Inferences.*

1. Even yet after his death Jesus must be slandered and reviled!—Why need the thought then vex or surprise me, that I shall be calumniated and vilified when in my grave by my foes?

2. The enemies of Jesus endeavoured in their weakness to prevent his resurrection: but in reality they did nothing else than put its truth beyond a doubt. Thus wise and skilful is God, above all the conceptions of men, to bring the impious and vain devices of his adversaries to nought.

3. Every circumstance alike of the sufferings, the death, and the interment of Jesus conduces to the confirmation of my belief, that he was the true Son of God, the sole Saviour of mankind, and the same that now sitteth at the right hand of the Father, till he come again in infinite might, majesty, and power, to judge all the dwellers of the earth.—To HIM be all honour and glory ascribed for ever and ever! And may his blessing and his salvation be and abide with every one of us, both here and in eternity!

THE END.

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